The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East

edited by RICHARD STONEMAN,
KYLE ERICKSON, AND IAN NETTON

ANS 15

The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East

ANCIENT NARRATIVE

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BARKHUIS PUBLISHING &
GRONINGEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
GRONINGEN 2012

Book design: Barkhuis
Cover Design: Nynke Tiekstra, Noordwolde

Image on cover: Kay Kāvūs and Companion shoot the arrow into the Angel holding the Fish, National Library of Russia, PNS 64, f. 75v, 18th century, Iran.

ISBN 9789491431043

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Introduction

RICHARD STONEMAN
University of Exeter

Alexander’s posthumous fame in the lands that had made up his empire is a paradox. Received for the most part with hostility (except in Egypt, where he was welcomed, and in Babylon, where the rulers knew how to accommodate themselves to changing circumstances), his rule was imposed by force and sometimes with brutality. Zoroastrian tradition in Iran remembers him as the great destroyer, a new Zahhak, and in Iraq his name is still that of a bogeyman. Yet Persian literature presents him as a hero, a legitimate king, a wise ruler and a pious but inquisitive explorer. Arabic Romances develop the picture of the sage and prophet of God. The picture is not unlike that which developed in medieval Europe, of a wise king and Christian, sometimes even Christ-like, opponent of the enemies of Christendom. What these two traditions have in common is the *Alexander Romance*.

Though Alexander’s name was hardly one to conjure with, it seems, during the time of the Seleucid Empire, whose political foundations rested on other justifications than that of the first conqueror, the situation was very different in Egypt. Here it was that the *Alexander Romance* originated and started its own journey of conquest of the literatures of the world. Yet not the smallest fragment of the work in Egyptian is known, though Egyptain versions must surely have existed, as we may deduce from the plot of the *Dream of Nectanebo* as well as from the existence of the Coptic versions discussed by Leslie McCoull. From Greek the *Romance* rapidly entered Syriac, in the fifth century AD, and Syriac texts provided the basis for the first independent versions in both Persian and Arabic. The papers assembled in this volume explore the connections and the tensions created by this remarkable – I am tempted to say unique – diffusion of the fictional story of a single man and his conquests and explorations.

Daniel Selden’s paper develops a framework for the understanding of the way fluid texts like the *Alexander Romance* cross linguistic and cultural boundaries, adapting themselves to local circumstances and refusing to be tied to a definitive version. He suggests that such texts are actually more common in antiquity (and perhaps at other periods too) than works defined by a single person's authorship. Sophocles is not Protean as the *Romance* is. Selden makes an ambitious analogy with the conditions of the first multicultural empire, the Achaemenid empire, in which for the first time unity could be sought in plurality, and thus pose the philosophical question that Pre-Socratic philosophers wrestled with as well as the political question that any imperial ruler had to face. The *Alexander Romance* appears in a multiplicity of forms yet somehow – usually – it is still recognisable from its basic structure, content and concerns. Faustina Doufikar-Aerts continues to explore these tensions by considering whether the stories of Alexander that occur throughout the modern Middle East are scattered local legends (as Michael Wood implied in his impressive television series) or whether they are embedded tales, an extensive substrate of which, perhaps, Westerners see only the isolated peaks that poke above the surface.

Warwick Ball, by contrast, suggests that Alexander stories in, for example, Uzbekistan do not have a continuous history but are resurrected at will as political circumstances demand. The creation of a nation just twenty years ago has resulted in the search for new heroes; not just Tamerlane, but Alexander's opponent Spitamenes, after whom a village has been renamed. The blue-eyed inhabitants of Kafiristan, he suggests, have discovered a Greek ancestry because of the availability of a Greek aid project: in the nineteenth century, they did not self-identify as descendants of the Macedonians. Yet in Uzbekistan one is told that Alexander invented the national dish, plov, as well as some of the traditional marriage customs. Such stories are not invented out of nothing for political reasons, but arise because of an undercurrent of consciousness of the story of the conqueror. A local legend may be a particular manifestation of an embedded tale.

All this suggests that the many-in-one phenomenon that is the Alexander story is not a feature simply of late antiquity, but continues even to the present day. If we could understand better how this story of a western conqueror, whose empire broke up as soon as it was gained, has permeated the minds of the peoples of the Middle East, we might come a little closer to understanding what it is that unites two parts of the world that often seem at odds, or at least to a clearer view of the tensions that divide us.

The Alexander that emerges from these papers has many faces. His military prowess is taken for granted but rarely comes to the fore in the stories that derive from the *Alexander Romance*. He can win a battle almost without thinking about it, because of his natural cleverness. More attention is paid to his battles with non-human opponents – the giant crabs, monstrous beasts, dragons and giant or pygmy people of the lands beyond the world. In the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (first written in Syriac) he encloses the Unclean Nations of Gog and Magog that threaten the world; the tale moves into the later versions of the Greek Romance but also, directly, into the Qur'an. His cleverness is the counterpart of his inquisitiveness, which makes him in some traditions first and foremost an explorer. In Abu Taher Tarsusi's *Darabnameh* all he does is explore one remote part of the world after another, and after long wanderings he is able to join forces with the philosopher Plato, here a great inventor of wondrous machines. Mario Casari shows how closely exploration of the world entails a kind of intellectual conquest of the world – not just the darkness of the north but the depths of the sea and the heights of the air. By surrounding himself with philosophers – as his imitator Mithridates VI did later – he becomes in effect a philosopher himself, as Sulochana Asirvatham indicates.

The philosopher and inquirer may seem rather far from the conquering hero, and in Tarsusi (again) he becomes notably unheroic; it is his wife Burandukht who makes the military running in this text, which must represent a significant strand of stories current in Iran before Firdausi composed his *Shahnameh*. His real wife, Roxane, is by contrast little more than a cipher in most of these texts, and exhibits much less variation than her Protean husband, as is clear from Sabine Müller's examination of her appearances. The notable sexlessness of the legendary Alexander is one of his most curious features. (But it is thoroughly compensated in the anonymous fourteenth-century *Iskandarnameh*, where he has numerous liaisons, including one with Araqit, queen of the fairies.) This 'Boys' Own' hero's most important feminine relationship continues to be with his mother, or with the substitute mother represented by Candace.

In Muslim authors the philosopher and sage becomes a devotee of Allah and a prophet of his faith. This aspect is to the fore in Nizami and in the Arabic romances. It occurs in parallel with the adoption of Alexander into Jewish wisdom in the Talmud and earlier; his visit to Jerusalem led to one of the quickest conversions to Judaism in history, and was reflected in the latest versions of the Greek *Romance* as well as in the Talmud, where besides building talismans to protect the harbour of Alexandria he becomes a look-alike of Solomon in his wisdom and statecraft.

The Alexander of legend, then, has little in common with the conquering warrior. One area in which his memory does overlap with his actual achievement is in the memory of him as a builder. Besides the city of Alexandria by Egypt, he is remembered for innumerable 'walls' all over Central Asia, from the Caucasus to the Great Wall of China. Lakes, too, bear his name. Anyone who looked about them in Hellenistic Bactria would see plenty of evidence of the Macedonian impact, as Olga Palagia shows in her paper on art; and his iconography, as Agnieszka Fulinska shows, quickly became established as that of 'the two-horned one', which became his name in Arabic literature. How early this image of Alexander was established – no doubt through the influence of coinage – is shown by a Sassanian period wall painting (1st-3rd c. AD) at Fayaz Tepa near Termez where the Iranian features are clearly topped by two great curling ram's horns.

The development of this complex and resonant character can be traced through several core texts. In this volume, Haila Manteghi examines the *Shahnameh* and considers the question of Firdausi's sources by study of proper names; a similar approach is applied to Mubaššir ibn Fatik's *Ahbar al-Iskander* by Emily Cottrell. El-Sayed Gad provides a masterly account of the formation of the Alexander who appears in the history of al-Tabari, while David Zuwiyya outlines some of the features of the extensive romance of 'Umara ibn Zayd. Ory Amitay and Aleksandra Kleczar analyse different aspects of the Talmudic accounts of Alexander, while Corinne Jouanno shows how even late (Byzantine) Greek versions of the *Romance* could be in turn influenced by eastern perceptions. (A similar study could, I am sure, usefully be undertaken for the Turkish *Iskendername* of Ahmedi.) My own paper tries to suggest some possibilities of Persian influence on Greek story at the inception of the tradition.

Several authors bring hitherto undiscussed texts into play. Mario Casari discusses an unpublished Persian geographical account which has an important bearing on the Persian image of Alexander. Hendrik Boeschoten reveals some features of a recently discovered Turkish text, where the hero rejoices in the portmanteau-name of Zülkender, and points to the existence of another MS (of 900 folios!) awaiting examination. Daniel Ogden brings the *Book of the Deeds of Ardashir* more closely to bear on the Persian Alexander story. Yuriko Yamanaka demonstrates that Alexander's name even reached Chinese geographical accounts through Arab intermediaries.

These papers show how interwoven the Alexander story is with geography in every sense. Alexander as an explorer creates geographical knowledge; his story is geographically dispersed through means that we can only sometimes clearly perceive. The original arrival of his story in Persia from Syriac, and perhaps from oral tradition, is still imperfectly understood but may yield some secrets to further research. The importance of Christian Arabs in the transmission from Syriac to the Qur'an, and of Nestorian Christians on the Silk Road from the Arab World to China, can be further explored. The *Mappae Mundi* have been studied (and are mentioned by Casari) but could be brought into relation with maps from the east that await investigation, as Doufikar-Aerts has commented. There are surprising convergences of story-motifs, such as the occurrence of mechanical, or 'magical', contraptions in the Turkish text studied by Boeschoten and in the medieval German author Ulrich von Eschenbach (or Etzenbach), and the appearance of Grail-like objects in both the eastern texts and in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, to which Graham Anderson draws attention. Such collocations emphasise the problems awaiting anyone who tries to draw up a stemma of Alexander stories. These are, as Firuza Melville calls them, wandering stories. Their iconography also wanders, as she shows in the case of the famous flying machine which becomes a symbol of Kai Kavus' depravity. (Its meaning in medieval Europe is much more problematic). New connections remain to be made, as Aleksandra Szalc demonstrates in her argument for an Indian origin of the story of the Water of Life, so central to the Alexander legend – and which surfaces again in Grimm's Fairy Tales.

This volume offers a cross-section of approaches to the Protean Alexander-material. I hope that it raises as many questions as it answers, not least about methodology. What is the right way to analyse texts that vary so much from each other? Is source-criticism the way forward, or a stultifying dead end, as Dan Selden suggested in discussion? It certainly has value for some of the disciplines that are less developed than classical philology; for example, such work needs to be done for the first time for Mubashshir. Can this be done through close examination of proper names? Is this more than a new version of the traditional Arabic documentation known as the *isnad?* If traditions are re-invented rather than continuous, is it easier or harder to determine sources, or does the question become scarcely relevant as compared to, say, political context? Do convergences in remotely separated literatures need to be explained? Ory Amitay has proposed the development of a comprehensive database of Alexander-texts, to facilitate comparisons. More too can be done to study the iconography of Alexander stories, especially in the Persian texts. Has the time come to allow the discipline of literary criticism to work on such aspects as character in the romances, and if so how? What is the place of authorial intention in an anonymous text? Should we see humour in such features as Khidr's personal airmail service of Alexander's letters to his mother, or are we guilty of misprision?

In the end, the story of Alexander does, it seems to me, cohere around certain primary motifs: the Faustian search for universal knowledge and dominion, the search for immortality and the contrast of the active and contemplative lives encapsulated in his interview with the Brahmans. I have written that Alexander is a kind of Everyman. But is Everyman a universal figure or is he a western construct? Only further research can tell.

A Note on Transliteration and Bibliography

Various systems of transliteration are in use for the languages that appear in this book, which include Greek, Arabic, Persian, Syriac, Hebrew, Coptic and Medieval Turkic. Diacritical marks can also be applied with differing levels of thoroughness. In this book, each author has been allowed to use their own preferred system.

Bibliographies are appended to each article and have not been consolidated at the end of the book.

Part 1

Formation of a Tradition

Persian Aspects of the Romance Tradition

RICHARD STONEMAN
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Persian Writers on Alexander

سکندررا نمی بخشند آبی
بزور و زر میسر نیست ان کر
Hafez (*Ghazal* 37 in Gray 1995)

‘They did not allow Alexander the Water; by struggling or by gold, that is impossible to achieve.’ Hafez’s reference to Alexander’s failure to discover the water of Life for himself is highly allusive. He mentions only ‘Water’, not even giving it its usual designation of Water of Life (*ab-e khayat)*. Certainly the story was one of the most familiar about Alexander in Persian literature of the Middle Ages, outside the works devoted to his adventures. In another ghazal of Hafez (13 in Gray 1995) the Water of Life is linked with the garden of Iram,[1] another place visited by Alexander in legend (in this case in Nizami), and the idea is familiar to Khayyam also.[2] Sa’adi mentions the story:[3] ‘You have heard that Alexander went into the Land of Darkness with so much tribulation, but only he who drank the water of life drank it.’ Alexander’s visit to the Fountain of Life is a popular scene in the illustrated *Falnamas*.[4] The motif is so frequent that I incline to think it pre-existed any connection with the Alexander story.[5] Pseudo-Aristotle[6] men-

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[1] There is also a fine translation in Bell 1995, 83.

[2] The fountain is often referred to in the *Adventures of Amir Hamza* (Lakhnani and Bilgrami 2007, 35, 567, 836), though not in connection with Alexander.

[3] *Gulistan* tr. Thackston 2008, 163.

[4] E.g. Farhad and Bağci 2009, 297.

[5] West 1971, 60-63, thinks it has connections with Indian ideas about soma and their Indian congeners. The κρῆναι αμβρόσιαι of E. *Hipp*. 748, cf. Pi. Fr 198b, are however probably no more than ‘divine’: Barrett ad loc.

[6] *De mirab. auscult*. 29.

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tions a whirlpool in Cilicia 'in which birds, and animals besides, that have been suffocated, when immersed come to life again.' This region of south-eastern Asia Minor seems to have been a conduit between the Near East and Greece of many ideas both religious and remarkable, so the story may have been collected by the author as it journeyed from further east.[7]

The Water of Life is just one example of the many stories about Alexander that circulated freely in Persian literature after, but also independently of, Ferdowsi and Nizami. The wonderstone that turns out to be a human eye and loses power when covered in dust, perhaps originally a Jewish tale but alluded to also in the Qur'an, appears in Sa'adi (85) as well as Tarsusi (393). Tarsusi and the *Falnamas* share an interest in the story of Gog and Magog, while the talking trees that come from the *Alexander Romance* appear also in Amir Hamza (674) and in a different context in *Vis o Ramin* (293). *Amir Hamza* includes the stories of Alexander's Wall, and also of Alexander's Whirlpool, which I at least have encountered nowhere else. Like Alexander, Bahram Gur in the *Shahnameh* travels to India and employs disguises. The over-riding theme of the Alexander legend, the search to know (and perhaps avoid) the day of one's death, is a leitmotif in *Amir Hamza* too. The arrival in Persian literature of this adopted Rumi king is, as has long been recognised, something new and surprising. I want in this paper to explore the impact of Alexander on Persian storytelling from various angles – not just the question, how did the *Alexander Romance* get transmitted into Persian?, but how far the arrival of the Alexander story marks a new direction for Persian storytelling. I wish also to consider the state of Persian storytelling when Alexander arrived in Susa. We know from his court chamberlain Chares that he heard the old story of Zariadres and Odatis. Chares recounted the story at length in Book X of his history, the same book in which he described the festivities at Susa accompanying the mass marriages of Macedonian peers and Iranian noble women. I surmise that at this event Alexander mingled not only the blood of his own and his adopted nations, but also their stories. The excerpt in Athenaeus (12.54) from Chares' history tells us that at the five-day marriage feast there were Greek conjurers and harpists, flute-players, the theatrical troupe called the Dionysiokolakes, and performers both tragic and comic. Athenaeus then skips to another topic; but it would not be surprising if Chares had here gone on to list the Persian performers who were present and to take the opportunity to tell the story of Zariadres and Odatis (which Athenaeus introduces in another place in his book as an illustration of the theme of falling in love through dreams).

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[7] But see also the article by Aleksandra Szalc in this volume.

Achaemenid Stories

Let us suppose that Alexander heard, as Chares did, this ancient Median[8] story. What else might he, or his chamberlain, have heard as he journeyed through Persia? What, that is, can we know about Achaemenid storytelling? Oral as it was, and continued to be throughout the Parthian period, too little is known to reconstruct a tradition with confidence. Too much of the evidence we have to work with is Greek. Still, that Greek evidence is not negligible and I propose to see what we can get from it.

The views of classical scholars have varied on the value of Greek reports about Persia. Momigliano[9] expressed the view that 'there is no evidence that Ctesias tried to understand the Persians', and that Greek writers of the Parthian period showed no interest in Persia. Martin West (1971) takes an opposite view, regarding knowledge of Persian thought in the fifth and fourth centuries BC as quite sophisticated, at least in certain authors, such as Plato. Lionel Pearson (1960, 59) remarked that 'Greeks and Orientals had been able to exchange stories for two centuries, and many of their tales must have become common property by Alexander's time'. More recently, Peter Kingsley has argued forcefully for a deep interpenetration of people and ideas:[10] 'we know the names of hundreds of Greeks, including Athenians, who were attracted for various reasons by Persia and went there during the two centuries down to the time of Alexander. There will have been a great many more whose names we will never know.' Doctors were in demand: Democedes in Hdt 3.125-37, and Ctesias. Hippocrates refused an invitation to the Persian court. We should bear in mind, too, how easy it is for stories to cross language barriers, in ways that in our more literate culture are difficult to understand. The point was already familiar from Vladimir Propp, and recently Robin Lane Fox has illustrated it in a masterly fashion in relation to the travelling Greeks of the eighth century BC and their adoption of tales from Hittite and other Levantine sources.[11] Lane Fox sees a main conduit as intermarriage; the native wife regales her exotic husband with her homely tales, and they get back to Greece as myths. This need not be the only model but it is a plausible one. One should note too that Greeks seem to have found it comparatively easy to learn Persian: Themistocles got the hang of it in a year,[12] and Ctesias after seventeen years must have been practically bilingual; he just didn't write down the things that Momigliano wanted him to be interested in. Salman Rushdie's conceit of the 'Sea of Stories' is not out of place here; welling up from a source below the Ocean, streams of story constantly mingle and twist and re-form, crossing language barriers and making new combinations; he jests that his preening Prince Bolo has caused the creation of a number of new stories: 'Bolo and the Forty Thieves', 'Bolo and Juliet', 'Bolo in Wonderland'. We shall have to consider whether Alexander may have been the Prince Bolo of Persian literature.

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[8] Boyce 1955, 470.

[9] Momigliano 1975, 133 on Ctesias and 141 on Parthia.

[10] Kingsley 1995, 188.

[11] Lane Fox 2008.

Xanthus of Lydia

When we consider what can be deduced from Greek authors about Achaemenid storytelling, we have a few prominent authors to consider. Herodotus is the elephant in the room, so big that he obscures the view of everything else,[13] but let us consider one of his sources, Xanthus of Lydia, the probable composer of some kind of 'Croesus Romance' which forms the basis of Herodotus' narrative of that king's reign. Xanthus, born around 500 in a Sardis which had been part of the Persian empire for nearly fifty years, was in a good position to know about Persia as well as Greece. He is one of our most important or at any rate earliest informants on Zoroastrian religion. His *Lydiaka* ranged widely over the history of his land and that of the neighbouring Greeks.[14] Xanthus straddles the cultures in a very interesting way. If part of *Lydiaka* was indeed a 'Croesus Romance', nevertheless the tale of Croesus as Herodotus tells it is Greek through and through in its religious attitudes. The structuring of the story around Croesus' treatment of oracles is something that could not come out of a Persian milieu; for Herodotus made it clear that Persians could not understand oracles (Hdt 9.42-3). Two generations after the fall of Sardis, when Xanthus was writing, Croesus' story will have become legend. Did it circulate on Lydian lips, or in Persian, or Greek? Or all three, with variations?

At any rate stories of a king are the kind of thing Persian hearers are likely to have enjoyed. 'On that night could not the king sleep', writes the author of the Book of Esther (6.1), ‘and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus’. It is perhaps surprising that Ahasuerus learns of a plot against his life only from a chance reading of a bedtime story; but it gives a clue to the kind of thing that would have been in the chronicles and that the noble hearer might wish to hear – not dates of battles or lists of cases at law, but stories of court intrigue.[15] In twelfth century AD Persia, a story-teller had still to be on duty at night in the palace in case the king needed him.[16]

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[12] Plutarch, *Themistocles* 27 and Thuc. 1.138.1; Llewellyn-Jones 2009, 55. See also Kuhrt 2007, 840-8 on language and the use of interpreters.

[13] Christensen 1936, 112-6, discussing for example the surely Persian tale of Deioces (Hdt 1.96ff).

[14] Momigliano 1993, 32, in suggesting that he wrote a Life of Empedocles, added: 'we shall soon see that interest in biographical stories was more widespread in Asiatic than in metropolitan Hellas'.

Ctesias of Cnidus

Stories of court intrigue are exactly what Ctesias gives us in abundance (or such abundance as is left in his fragments). Ctesias was born in 441 BC and was in Persia from an uncertain date until 398/7: a total, he tells us, of seventeen years. Christensen (1936, 116), thought his sources were the βασιλικαι διφθεραι (for which the Persian translation would be *shahnameh);* Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (2010, 57) suggests that Ctesias might have got his stories direct from the queen, demurring at an alternative view that he got them from gossip with cooks and eunuchs. It rather depends what you think was the status of the court doctor. Maybe he had access to archives or daybooks, but maybe he simply listened to stories, like that of Stryangaeus and Zarinaea (F8).[17] The Persian warrior Stryangaeus pursued the Saca female warrior Zarinaea after she was wounded in battle; but when she begged him for mercy, he fell in love with her and spared her; but she rejected him as a suitor and he killed himself. This theme of love that crosses the barriers of war recurs frequently in later Persian stories, and it is also closely echoed in the work of the next author to be considered, Xenophon.

Xenophon

Xenophon’s *Education of Cyrus* may be the ancestor of historical biography but it is in part also a romance whose heroine is Panthea. Dick Davis (2002) took this figure as the emblem of his argument for the two-way traffic between Greek novelistic writing and Persian authors. Her story so much resembles that of Zarinaea that it is impossible not to suppose that Xenophon was also aware of the story, though he concealed it more heavily. Other elements in Xenophon also surely originate from Persian tradition, most notably the account of the death of Cyrus, which notoriously differs from that given by Herodotus. As Steven Hirsch writes[18] 'Much of the content of Cyrus' deathbed oration is invented by Xenophon….But the historical framework is manifestly not the invention of Xenophon.[19] There is a strikingly similar account of the last moments of Cyrus in Ctesias' *Persika* (fr. 9)'.[20] The monarch on the point of death summons his family and friends and speaks to them about matters of morality. The soothing moral of the tale seems more likely to be fiction than the hideous end Herodotus describes, his severed head stuck in a bag of blood by the Scythian Queen Tomyris: Herodotus himself says that other stories of Cyrus' death were current but he rated them less highly. Again, then, the ambience of the court seems to determine the story that comes to us from Persian tradition.

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[15] Heroic tales were also important for education: Strabo 15.3.18, cf. X. *Cyrop* 1.2.1, Dinon F9 Lenfant and Heraclides F1-2 Lenfant (recital at dinner).

[16] De Bruijn 2009, 24. Compare the introduction to the story of Bizhan in the *Shahnameh*, which Firdausi’s companion tells to him as a cure for sleeplessness.

[17] Did he tell the story of Achaemenes reared by an eagle (Aelian *NA* 12.21) which resembles that of Zal reared by the Simurgh? See Yarshater 1983, 389.

Plutarch

Another witness for Ctesias' account, and for some of its alternatives, is Plutarch's *Life of Artaxerxes*. For the first 22 chapters Plutarch has one eye on his Ctesias, whom he cites frequently. Court intrigue is prominent in the story of the revolt of Cyrus the Younger, for it is his mother Parysatis' preference for this younger son, and her hatred of Artaxerxes' wife Stateira, that precipitates the revolt. In the end Parysatis successfully poisons her hated daughter-in-law. But in chapter 23, Plutarch writes, Artaxerxes was reconciled with Parysatis. It would be hard to forgive even a mother for poisoning your wife, so we may posit a change of source as the reason: Plutarch is now following Dinon, who retailed an 'official' version of the events at court.[21] (Ctesias had returned to Greece in 398/7). Now, we find that Artaxerxes has fallen in love with his own daughter, Atossa, and married her. As Artaxerxes grows old, it is arranged that Darius will succeed him; however, his younger son Ochus promises to marry Atossa. Darius muddies the water by demanding to have his father's Greek mistress Aspasia, and concocts a plot against Ochus but is apprehended and killed. Ochus then forces Artaxerxes' son Ariaspes to commit suicide and also kills Arsames. All this is too much for poor Artaxerxes, who dies.

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[18] Hirsch 1985, 83.

[19] For Christensen 1936, 126-34, this account is definitely from Iranian epic.

[20] But the legend of Cyrus' birth given in Ctesias seems to be of popular origin: Christensen 1936, 120.

[21] As he did on the death of Cyrus the Younger: see Lenfant 2009, 181; and 174 on Parysatis.

Family Romances

The incestuous love of Artaxerxes and his daughter is one of those motifs of Persian royal culture that struck Greeks as extremely odd, and it is virtually the norm in Persian romance.[22] In an extension of the motif, fathers may be possessive (as in the *Karnamag-i-Ardashir)* or a king may desire a girl young enough to be his daughter (as in *Vis o Ramin*). But there may be an echo of stories of this kind in the Greek legend of Scylla, who was loved by her father Nisus, as well as that of Myrrha, who fell in love with her father Cinyras. The story of Scylla is interesting because the rest of her story, in which she betrays her city to the commander of the attacking forces, Minos, with whom she has fallen in love, is also found in a Persian version concerning the Sassanid king Shapur and an unnamed princess. The story is found in Tabari and Mirkhond, and Nöldeke thought that it had been borrowed from the story of Nisus and Scylla.[23] In a similar way, the princess Zijanak in the *Karnamag-i-Ardashir* betrays her father Ardavan in order to run off with Ardashir. It is possible that we are dealing here with a Persian story to which Greeks have added the detail about incest because they thought it suited the Persian milieu.[24]

Parthian and Sassanian storytelling

But we have begun to move away from Achaemenid romance to stories from the Sassanian period. There are plenty of good reasons to make connections between Hellenistic Romance and Parthian and Sassanian storytelling. This has been explored at length by Dick Davis in *Panthea's Children*, and Tim Whitmarsh (2009, 10) makes the sensible point that several of the Greek novelists originated from Asia Minor where Persian and other near eastern stories might be current. But he leaves open the question (13) of how exactly *Metiochus and Parthenope* became known in Persia to resurface as the eleventh century poem *Vamiq o Adhra*. I want to go on to discuss some of the connections that might have made this transition possible.

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[22] Grenet 2003, 37-9; Lenfant 2009, 312-3. The *Testament of Ardashir* enjoins it as a way of preserving the bloodline and avoiding the complications of in-laws: Christensen 1936, 97.

[23] Wirth 1894.

[24] Another form of family romance is that in which a wife falls in love with her stepson, is rejected by him and accuses him of rape – the 'Potiphar's wife' motif. It is familiar in Greek literature in the story of Phaedra, and in Persian in the story of Sudabeh, the wife of Kai Kavus, and her stepson Siyavush. (Christensen 1936, 37; Yarshater 1983, 447). Is this a borrowing from Greek literature? Or simply a universal folktale?

A difficulty that faces us here is that we have very little evidence for literature of the Parthian period. This is because it was oral, and so we are forced to make surmises on the basis of later Sassanian written versions. Furthermore, there seems to be a break in tradition since no tales about the Achaemenid kings have made their way into classical Persian literature; the *Khoday-namag*, compiled on the orders of Khosrow I Anushirvan, a later version of which was used by Ferdowsi, did not supply that author with any solid information about them, though attempts have been made to match the genealogy of the legendary kings onto that of the Achaemenids.[25] Apart from the *Khoday-namag*, Parthian origins may be posited for several works including the original source of *Vis o Ramin*[26] and the *Hymn of the Pearl* found in the Acts of Thomas.[27] The story of Zariadres and Odatis, which we know from Chares was current in Achaemenid times, seems to have undergone a metamorphosis into the story of Zarir, which was studied by Mary Boyce (1955). She suggested that the story began as a religious tale, since the name Nahid, which occurs in it, seems to be that of the Babylonian goddess Anahita. The process would be analogous to that recently traced by Stephanie Dalley (2007) for the story of Esther, a tale with a Persian setting in which the names can be mapped on to those of Babylonian deities (Ishtar and Marduk becoming Esther and Mordecai).[28]

Boyce (1983, 1151-6) believed that no influence of Greek literature on Parthian story was possible because of the oral nature of the latter. The inference does not seem compelling and Davis (2002) has argued for some interaction but nothing can be said for certain. If it is really true that the Parthian court was enjoying a performance of Euripides' *Bacchae* at the precise moment when the head of the Roman general Crassus was brought back from the battlefield of Carrhae, to be used as a stage prop, we can speak of both influence and enjoyment of Greek literature in Parthia; but the story invites incredulity.

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[25] Rejected by Christensen 1936, 37, citing his earlier *Les Kayanides* – which I have not seen. On the reconstruction of the Khoday-namag, see now Howard-Johnston 2010, 341-53.

[26] Tellingly, the author uses the Parthian term *gosan* : de Bruijn 2009, 21.

[27] The latter contains many names and details of setting that belong to the Parthian period, though its composition may most plausibly be put in the early third century CE: van Bladel 2009, 58.

[28] Yarshater 983, 447 suggests that Kai Kavus is modelled on Nabu-na'id; and think too of Lane Fox's argument (2008) about Hittite gods moving into Greek story.

We are on firmer ground when we reach the establishment of the Sassanian dynasty, which began a process of recording of the ancient Iranian tales in written form.[29] Kevin van Bladel (2009) has argued that an enthusiasm for Greek literature arose at the same time, in the reign of Shapur I in the third century CE. Several Arabic sources aver that Shapur was a supporter of an early translation movement.[30] According to these accounts, 'the Greek books translated into Persian were considered to have been the remnants of the ancient wisdom of Iran'.[31] Now this idea is itself a topos,[32] but could it reveal an awareness that some of the stories that were current were in some way shared between Greek and Persian literature? We know that *Metiochus and Parthenope* was a popular story on the Euphrates in the third century, because one of the elite had its protagonists illustrated in a mosaic that adorned his villa in Zeugma. Might this story, set in the reign of Polycrates, a Greek ruler on the fringe of the Achaemenid Empire, have had a Persian original? Think too of the Greek romance of Ninus and Semiramis. Did a Greek really make up this story out of whole cloth? Was there not an intermediary? The essentials of the story are already in Ctesias, but our witness for Ctesias' treatment, Diodorus, has squeezed out the romantic aspects in an effort to make it into history. It would be characteristic of Ctesias to have told a more romantic tale, and what would his source have been if not Persian?[33]

It is also possible that the *Alexander Romance* was translated from Greek into Middle Persian as early as the third century. Claudia Ciancaglini (1998) set out to disprove this hypothesis of Nöldeke's by arguing that the phonological changes in the proper names in the Syriac version were such as would be made in translating from Greek to Syriac; but recently van Bladel (2007) has restated Nöldeke's case, which fits in the context of his assumption of a more extensive translation movement from Greek into Persian in the third century. The question remains unresolved but the case for a third century link is strengthening. With this Shapurian translation movement, then, story forms that had moved from Persian to Greek in the fifth century BC began to move back into Persian, with the *Alexander Romance* leading the charge.

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[29] In ca 932 CE Estakhri wrote 'they have … a language called Pahlavi, in which are written books about the Persians of old and their exploits, and which Persians cannot understand without it being interpreted'. De Bruijn 2009, 47.

[30] Van Bladel 2009, 41.

[31] Van Bladel 2009, 43.

[32] Aristotle was commonly blamed for copying the Persian books, or, in other versions, the books of Solomon, and passing them off as his own. A modern version of the story holds that Aristotle stole the wisdom of the ancient Africans from the Library in Alexandria and pretended that he had written it himself. See Stoneman 2008, 59 n. 30.

[33] The resemblances to the *Cyropaideia* are also telling: Stephens and Winkler 1995, 26.

Karnamag-i-Ardashir

If we turn now to a late Sassanian work, the *Karnamag-i-Ardashir*, we find a story that has many features in common both with Greek romance and with the 'Achaemenid' works we have looked at above. Nöldeke attributed the version we have to the reign of Chosrow II (590-628), but a version of the story was already known to the Greek historian Agathias (II.27) who died in 582.[34] The best known point is the coincidence of the story of the birth of Ardashir's son Shapur with that of Cyrus the Great in Herodotus (1.107ff).[35] In Herodotus, Cambyses wants his son killed because he believes that he will overthrow him; but the boy Cyrus is hidden and brought up by shepherds. One day Cambyses recognises his own son and re-adopts him. The other versions of the birth of Cyrus are at variance. Ctesias makes him the son of a brigand, while Xenophon mentions none of this and gives him a smooth succession to his father. The story of Sasan in the *Karnamag-i-Ardashir* is precisely similar: Ardashir wishes to execute his wife Zijanak for trying to poison him, but because she is pregnant the *mobeds* forbid it. Ardashir insists, so the *mobed*s conceal the child until one day, Ardashir recognises him and decides to acknowledge him as his successor because of his noble qualities. Now this is an old old story pattern, told also of Kai Khusrau.[36] It is found in slightly different form (not a son, but a wise adviser) in one of the oldest stories we know, that of Ahiqar, in which King Sennacherib orders the execution of the wise Ahiqar; but the executioner rescues Ahiqar instead and conceals him in his own house. In due course the king comes to regret his death, at which point the executioner is able to produce the supposedly dead sage and win the king's gratitude. It recurs in a Coptic tale of Alexander

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[34] Grenet 2003, 27.

[35] Also told of Sargon of Akkad: Grenet 2003, 31.

[36] Christensen 1936, 37, Yarshater 1983, 388-9.

(where it is Alexander who is hidden, until the king regrets his decision)[37] and for that matter in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (where it is the wife that Leontes has put away who is restored to him), as well as being attached to the Islamic hero Loqman.[38] This tale may surely go back to early strata of Persian story, and offer a rare example of transmission of an Achaemenid motif into later Persian literature.

But let us go back to the beginning of the tale, and see what else we find. The *Karnamag* opens with the division of Iran into local princedoms following the death of Alexander the Great. Papak ruled in Fars, at Istakhr, but he had no son. However he had a shepherd, Sasan, a descendant of Dara, who had fled to the Kurds 'under Alexander's evil rule'. One day Papak dreamt that the sun shone from Sasan's head (one thinks of the fire that burnt on Servius Tullius' head and marked him as a future king of Rome). Ferdowsi modifies the portent by making three fires burn before Sasan, and goes on: 'Then the young man said: "I am the son of Sasan, a descendant of King Ardeshir, who is remembered under the name Bahman, and who was the son of the great Esfandyar, the son of Goshtasp".' Papak makes Sasan his heir and gives him his daughter in marriage. A son is born – Ardashir.

Now the superior king Ardavan sends for Ardashir. He is good at sport (like Cyrus) and one day outdoes Ardavan in hunting. This too is a story pattern, first encountered in Greek literature in Xenophon's *Cyropaideia* IV.6.2-6: it was the motivation for the Conspiracy of the Pages against Alexander, and turns up again as the motive for the murder of Odenathus of Palmyra in the reign of Shapur I (though it first appears in that context in the twelfth century author Zonaras).[39]

Ardavan has a beautiful daughter, Zijanak, who, you will not be surprised to hear, falls in love with Ardashir. Now Ardavan consults his astrologers, who report a detailed horoscope very much in the manner of Nectanebo's horoscope in the early pages of the *Alexander Romance*. It shows that Ardashir is likely to overthrow Ardavan. Zijanak reveals to Ardashir that he is in danger, and he flees: she accompanies him, after first stealing a quantity of treasure from her father. (This same motif of the daughter who steals her father's treasure to flee with her beloved occurs in *Vis o Ramin*).

Ardavan pursues, but Ardashir escapes, with a huge ram following him. I will say little about this except to observe that Daniel Ogden, in an unpublished paper, has interpreted this as a borrowing from the *Alexander Ro-*

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[37] Stoneman 1992c.

[38] Farhad and Bağcı 2009, 158.

[39] Stoneman 1992a, 108.

mance, where the hero flees from the Persian court, in disguise, perhaps as the ram-god Ammon himself. I will say even less about the succeeding episode in which Ardashir kills a dragon using the method that Alexander himself uses in Ferdowsi (a story not in the Greek *Romance).*[40] But I will mention Ardashir's predilection for disguises (*Karnamag* 53), a trait he shares with Alexander.

A little later comes the episode we have already described, of the upbringing of Zijanak's son Shapur and his reconciliation with his father. Ardashir makes war against another king, Mithrak, and kills all his sons; but his three year old daughter is, surprise surprise, concealed and brought up by a peasant. When she is a teenager she meets Shapur and they fall in love. A son is conceived, Ohrmazd. She keeps him in hiding until he is seven years old, when Ardashir spots him playing ball and recognises him as his son and successor.

Just as you are beginning to think this story might go on repeating itself like a faulty long-playing record, it comes to an end as Ohrmazd grows to maturity and re-unites Iran. The tale contains a number of motifs familiar from Achaemenid stories, but also a good admixture from the Greek *Alexander Romance*. The tide of the sea of story is beginning to turn.

Darab-nameh

The last text I want to discuss is the *Darab-nameh* of Abu Taher Tarsusi, dating from the eleventh to twelfth century CE and thus circulating at the time that Ferdowsi was composing the *Shahnameh.* Marina Gaillard's superb translation and edition of this text (2005) has made its contents and its problems much more available for discussion than before. An examination of this text reveals a really remarkable mixture of material from the *Alexander Romance*, material otherwise known in the Persian tradition about Alexander, elements from folktale, and even some borrowings (perhaps) directly from Greek stories. Most of the main motifs of the Alexander story in the *Romance* occur: Philip's dream of the egg, Alexander's education by Aristotle, and his refusal, as king, to pay the tribute of golden eggs to Persia; the death of Darius and Alexander's marriage to his daughter, here called Burandokht; the journey to the Ganges; the copper warriors; the encounters with monstrous races and a land of women (whose fondness for the male organ is so extreme that they wear quantities of them on strings around their necks); the dream of flight and the encounter with prophetic birds; the trees which grow and die each night and the tree of heads or waq-waq tree; the enclosure of Gog and Magog; and the journey into the darkness leaving foals behind so that the horses will find their way back. Alexander, though not always a forceful character, is perceived as a just king and a seeker of immortality, or of knowledge of the time of his death. However, his eventual death is the result of gradual illness (like Cyrus' in the *Education of Cyrus)*, not of poison as in the *Romance* nor of sudden affliction as in history.

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[40] See Daniel Ogden's paper in this volume.

Elements from the Islamic tradition include: his association with a bevy of philosophers including Aristotle, Plato and Hippocrates as well as the Mulsim holy men Loqman, Khizr and Elias; his mission to convert all peoples to Islam; it is prophesied that he will one day be called Zulqarnain; he visits the tomb of Adam, Mecca (where he builds the wall of the Ka'aba) and Jerusalem and hears a prophecy of the life of Mohammed; he fights against divs, aided by peris, and has a conversation with the simorgh; he is compared with Solomon; and at his death he is laid on a golden bier, a story otherwise occurring in the work of the Arab patriarch Eutychius.[41] One hand is left extending from his coffin to show that he leaves the world empty-handed.

Other folktale motifs are very numerous, and include: the baby hidden in a basket; Alexander as a dream interpreter ; the water of life; frequent disguises, of Alexander, Buran-Dokht and others; the six marvels of the king of India;[42] Plato as a magician and the inventor of mirrors, as well as frequent mentions of his astrolabe; an Indian magician who creates constant storms from clouds ascending from the blood of his daughter whom he has killed; giant birds; the tree which is so big it contains a shop for everything imaginable, but when Alexander tries to steal some sugar from the sweet shop, the doors lock themselves against him; a city which turns out to be the head of a giant fish; Plato's magic wheels which calm the ocean and a gate which holds the sea in; Plato's robot; an island of ape-people; a talking tortoise; an explanation of the Nile Flood; and the story of the Wonderstone. Some of these motifs could easily be classified in other ways but this selection should indicate the variety and inventiveness of the narrative.

Finally, is there anything Greek in the *Darab-nameh*? Certainly the author is aware of Greek literature since he refers at one point to a Greek 'Book of the Marvels of the Islands'. The preamble to the whole story (before Alexander's birth) involves a good deal of chasing around by lovers from one Greek island to another, and at one point Alexander himself visits a

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[41] Stoneman 2008, 191.

[42] Cf. Christensen 1936, 64 on the seven treasures of Kai Khosrow in the *Khoday-namag*.

Greek island. There is an account of Ptolemy's Tower (i.e. the Pharos). There is an account of a mass marriage which may be a recollection of the historical mass marriage at Susa (277). And the character Hippocrates appears with remarkable frequency in the narrative, for an individual whose only historical connection with Persia was his refusal to treat Artaxerxes II when sick; but maybe that tradition was known to Tarsusi?

Two stories invite particular attention.

1. In the *Darab-nameh* Alexander has a dream of flight, but he does not build a flying machine. The flying machine, as is well known, is transferred by Ferdowsi from the Alexander story to that of Kai Kavus' assault on heaven. However, the earliest known occurrences of a flying machine of this kind come in the *Life of Aesop*, which is heavily dependent on the tale of Ahiqar. Should we envisage a story known first in connection with Ahiqar in Babylonian tradition, moving through Persian lands to Greece, and now back into Persian via the *Alexander romance?* Its first appearance in the Greek version is in fact in the 8th century recension known as L, shortly before the activity of Tarsusi and Ferdowsi.[43]

2. In the *Darab-nameh*, when Alexander first develops a yen to find the Water of Life he is warned of failure by none other than the Simurgh (Gaillard 2005, 382); in his search he is accompanied by Khizr (as in the Qur'an); and when he reaches it he finds it guarded by ten angels, of a rather Iranian kind, who warn him to give up the search (Gaillard 2005, 397). Could the whole story be Persian in conception and origin?[44]

The *Darab-nameh* undoubtedly derives from oral traditions, and the author's frequent interjections of 'the narrator says' suggest a work composed in part from dictation (Ferdowsi used both a copyist and a reciter: De Bruijn 2009, 32). Dictation has also been held to be the cause of the mangling of proper names in the Syriac version of the *Alexander Romance*. So we are looking at a milieu in which literacy and orality work alongside one another. The variety of the stories about, or attached to, Alexander in the *Darab-nameh* is the best evidence we have for the kind of oral tales that would have been circulating alongside the *Alexander Romance* in the centuries preceding Ferdowsi. The fact that genuine historical titbits are preserved among these stories suggests a more continuous tradition of storytelling about Alexander in Parthian times than there was about the Achaemenids, and also the interplay of tales from the written, but much rewritten, *Romance* with those traditions, at least as early as the third century CE. In this way

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[43] See the full treatment by Abdullaeva 2009-10.

[44] But see Szalc in this volume.

Alexander's conquest of Iran, besides being a historical turning point, was a turning point in the development of Persian storytelling, which started the flow of Greek story-patterns into Persia where before it had gone the other way. Alexander never drank the Water of Life, but he opened the floodgates to an Ocean of Story.

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Mapping the Alexander Romance

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> The metaphysical image that a definite epoch forges of the world has the same structure as what the world immediately understands to be appropriate as a form of its political organization.
>
> Carl Schmitt

Between roughly 450 BCE and 1450 CE, readers across the Levant, North Africa, and Europe were united by complex networks of interrelated texts, attested in a multiplicity of languages, that contemporary scholars call the Ancient Novel. All available evidence points to the Afroasiatic origins of the narrative devices that typify these compositions,[1] whose several types show a diffusional pattern from the Levant around the Mediterranean and into Europe, southward through the Ḥijāz and Yaman to Ethiopia as well as eastward across Īrān to India and central Asia. Reciprocally, Indic and other oriental matter moved west, following the trade routes, progressively reworked as it crossed cultures to accord with Levantine-Mediterranean narrative traditions. A product of the intellectual ferment that Karl Jaspers termed the *Achsenzeit* ("Axial Age"),[2] the ancient novel flourished as an epiphenomenon within the multi-ethnic tributary empires of the Mediterranean and Middle East—Īrān, Makedonia, Rome, Byzantion, the Caliphates—where it achieved both its greatest artistic complexity and its widest geographical diffusion between the second and twelfth centuries CE. Under Ottoman rule, in Christian Ethiopia, and Mughal India the form continued to flourish well into the nineteenth century CE,[3] but with the decline of feudal culture in the West and the advancement of the capitalist world system,[4] such texts all but ceased to circulate in Europe. A small and relatively idiosyncratic selection of this corpus—the four Greek romances attributed to Xenophōn of Ephesos, Akhilleus Tatios, Longos, and Hēliodōros, together with the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius and the surviving fragments of C. Petronius' *Satyrika*—continued to capture the imagination of Western writers in the Renaissance and the Baroque, whence they played a formative role in the constitution of the modern novel.[5] Since the rediscovery of Kharitōn's *Kallirhoē* in the mid-eighteenth century, moreover, modern criticism has for the most part focused on these seven works,[6] which all date between the first and fourth centuries CE. Effectively, however, this has skewed our appreciation of the range of ancient fiction, which accordingly requires a "thicker" recontextualization within the larger parameters of Late Antique axial culture as a whole.[7]

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[1] Cf. Anderson 1984; Loprieno 2003.

[2] Jaspers 1949, 15-106; Eisenstadt 1986; Arnason, et al. 2005.

[3] See, for example, the introductory remarks of Keith-Falconer 1970 and Budge 1968.

[4] Wallerstein 1974.

I

The earliest extant piece of ancient novelistic prose—in M. M. Bakhtin's sense of the dialogical роман[8]—is the *Life of ʾAḥīqar*, which survives among the Aramaic papyri produced in Egypt under the first Īrānian occupation (525–404 BCE). While Pharaᶜonic Egypt developed its own indigenous tradition of court tales that hailed back at least as far as the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2040–1650 BCE),[9] it was not until the "Two Lands" became coercively incorporated as a tributary holding within the rapidly expanding political economy of the Levantine-Mediterranean world system[10]—consolidated under Īrānian hegemony and extended through the tributary empires which followed in its wake—that novels with an international horizon began to circulate in Aramaic, Demotic, Greek, Coptic, Latin, and Arabic, correlative with shifts in the culture of imperial administration.[11] Thus, the Old Aramaic *ʾAḥīqar*, redacted at the Jewish garrison on 𓍋𓃀𓃰𓅱𓏌𓈉 *3bw* (Aramaic: *Yeb*;

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[5] The fullest discussion is Doody 1996; cf. also Selden 1994.

[6] Schmeling 2003 would be the most recent example, Whitmarsh 2011 for the five Greek works.

[7] On "thick description", see Geertz 1972, 3-30.

[8] Bakhtin 1975, 72-233. See also, in this context, Branham 2002.

[9] See Loprieno 1996; Parkinson 2002; Quirke 2004.

[10] On the ancient Levant and East Mediterranean as a cohesive world system, see Amin 1991; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991; Rowlands, et al. 1987; Stein 1999; Denemark 2000; Wallerstein 2004; Algaze 2005; Chase-Dunn and Anderson 2005.

[11] Selden forthcoming.

Greek: *Elephantinē)*[12]—in the southwestern most corner of the Achaemenid domain—and copied over a Memphite customs account dated to 475 BCE,[13] takes as its geographical and historical horizon the compass of the Īrānian empire of which the Jewish mercenaries in Egypt collectively formed part. In contrast to the centrist policies circulating out of Yĕhud[14]—formerly an independent polity (*Mamĕleḵeṯ Yĕhudāh*),[15] but now one province among others in the Īrānian satrapy of Aθūrā[16]—the Jewish colony on *ꜣbw* effectively repudiated both the parochial nationalism of *ᵓĒlleh šĕmoṯ* ("These are the names";[17] Vulgate: Exodus[18]),[19] whose canonical redaction dates correspondingly to the first half of the fifth century BCE,[20] as well as the ethnic separatism that ᶜEzrāᵓ-Nĕḥemĕyāh (ca. 400 BCE) enjoined upon the exiles who had recently returned from Bābilim to Yĕrūšālaym under the auspices of Kūruš (Latin: Cyrus [576–530 BCE]):[21] "[The Levites] read to the people from the Book of Mōšeh, and it was found written therein that no ᶜAmmōnī or Mōᵓāḇī might ever enter the assembly of God (*qĕhal hāĕlohīm*) … When the people heard this teaching, they accordingly separated all the alien admixture from Israel (*wayyab̲ĕdīlu k̲āl-ᶜēreb̲ miyyiśrā'ēl*) [Neh. 13:1-3].” The verb *b̲ādal* (“to separate”) that the redactor has chosen hearkens back not only to the injunction in *Wayyiqĕrāᵓ* (Vulgate: Leviticus), “I am Yahweh, your god, who have set you apart (*hib̲ĕdaltī*) from other peoples (*hā-ᶜammīm*)” [20:24], but also, beyond that, to the opening of *Bĕrēᵓšīt̲* (Vulgate: Genesis) where God “divided (*wayyabĕdēl*) the darkness from the light, … and saw that it was good”[1:4], as if the expulsion of non-Hebrews from Yĕhud not only fulfilled the Mosaic covenant, but simultaneously constituted—like the reconstruction of the Second Temple—an act of cosmological renewal.[22]

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[12] See Porten, 1968; Modrzejewski 1992; Porten, et al., 1996; Bleiberg 2002; van Hoonacker 2011 [1915].

[13] For Aramaic as the lingua franca of the period, see Greenfield 1985.

[14] See Knowles 2006.

[15] See Miller and Hayes 2006; Grabbe 2007.

[16] Rainey 1969. On the province of Yehud, see Carter 1999; Grabbe 2004, esp. 132-56, 316-21; Lipschits 2006; Knowles 2006.

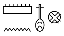
[17] Critical editions: Elliger and Rudolph 1997; Phillips 2004. On the title of the book, see Propp 1999, 119-20. For a concise overview of the various contemporary approaches to Exodus as a textual composition, see Redmount 1998. On the controversial historicity of the events—a possibility which has no bearing on the narrative as narrative per se—see Nicholson 1973; Hayes and Miller 1977, 151-56 and 264-77; Redford 1992; Hoffmeier 1997; Frerichs and Lesko 1997.

[18] The superscription in the Vulgate reads in its entirety: "Incipit liber Eleshmoth, id est Exodus" (viz., "The Book of Departure"). Cf. the Codex Alexandrinus, British Library, MS Royal 1. D. V-VIII: Ἔξοδος Αἰγύπτου. Other manuscripts of the Septuagint preserve the title: ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα. Critical Text: Wevers 1991. For the subsequent canonization of the book, see Auwers and de Jonge 2003; Knoppers and Levinson 2007. See also Beck 2000 and, on the desirability of preserving the specificity of the diverse titles and translations, rather than conflating them, Selden 2009.

[19] So Johnson 2010, 1: "[Exodus is] the most nationalist … of all foundation narratives." See further Wills 2008. See Wills 2008, 21-51.

[20] For a good summary treatment, see Propp 1999, 47-52. For the integrity of the book divorced from its later positioning within the Pentateuch, see Mullen 1997, 163-66. On the Aleppo Codex, the earliest surviving manuscript of the book see Goshen-Gottstein 1979; Schenker 2003.

[21] See Wills 2008, 53-86.

On *3bw*, by contrast, the Jewish community built its temples to Yāhu (בית יהו) and his consort Queen of Heaven (בית מלכת שמים) directly beside the Egyptian temple dedicated to the ram-headed *H̱nmw* (Greek: *Khnoum-is*), the island’s patron deity.[23] Surviving documents, moreover, attest to considerable social interchange between the two communities, everything from commercial contracts and intermarriage to linguistic hybridization and religious syncretism.[24] Thus, in a particularly well-preserved letter, the Aramaean Nab̲ušah writes from northern Egypt to his sister Nanaiḥem in *Swn.t* (Greek: *Syēnē*), just across the river from *3bw*: “I blessed you by Ptaḥ (ברכתכי לפתח) that he may let me behold your face in peace. Greetings (שלם), Bēyt̲ēlnāt̲an. Greetings to Šabbĕtai, son of Šūg. Greetings to Šaᵓil, son of Peṭeḥorṭais, and ᵓAšah, son of Peṭekhnum. Greetings to the whole neighborhood!”[25] Casting this same multicultural onomastics across a wider geographic range, the palimpsest that constitutes the subtext to the Old Aramaic *ᵓAḥīqar* records taxes levied on transimperial trade at  *Mn-nfr* (Greek: Memphis), the satrapal seat of the Great King:

> On the 16th of Tybi they inspected for Egypt (למצרין) 1 ship of Somenēs, son of Simonidēs, Iōnian. One large ship it is, in accordance with its measurements. The oil which was found in it is oil, 50 jars. The tribute (מנדתא) which was collected from it and made over to the house of the king (על בית מלכא [*scil.* Xšayāršā (Greek: Xerxēs)]:

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[22] See Najman 2009.

[23] See Porten 1968, 105- 99; Joisten-Pruschke 2008.

[24] For summation, see variously Porten 1968, 173-79, 249-52; Porten, et al. 1996,12-27; Muraoka and Porten 1998, 378-80; Botta 2009. Babylonians, Caspians, Khorazmians, Medes, and Perisans are also attested as members of the community (Porten 1968, 29).

[25] Porten and Yardeni 1986, 1:10, condensed. On the Jewish onomastics, see Porten 1968, 133-50.

> gold, 10 staters of gold, 8 sheqels, 15 hallurs; silver, 10 karsh, 2 hallurs, 2 quarters.[26]

Crown agents, presumably from *Yĕhud* (Judaea),[27] impost tariffs here on Greek merchant transporting oil from the satrapy of *Yaunā* (Iōnia) to the satrapy of *Mudrāya* (Egypt), which they remit, likely by way of the royal treasury at *Mn-nfr*, to the household (*viθā*) of the Great King at *Çūšā* (Susa) in *Hūjiya* (Elam).[28] Performed by day and month of the Egyptian calendar,[29] each entry weighs the tribute according to a mixture of Greek and Akkadian denominations,[30] thereby macaronically preserving local specificities,[31] at the same time that the registry sublates them within the totality of the non-homogenized, though clearly hierarchizing, Achaemenid politico-economic space.[32]

The composition that overwrites this ledger projects its geodialectics into historical romance, a fictionalized account of the distinguished Assyrian court scholar (*ummānu*)—whom a late witness identifies as Aba'enlildari[33] —divided between two clearly demarcated parts:[34] an introductory narrative (קדמת מלוהי) reminiscent of the Yosēf cycle in *Bĕrēʾšīṯ*,[35] followed by an eclectic set of apothegms (מלי) closely related to such sapiential literature as *Mišĕlēi* (Vulgate: Proverbia).[36] The tale, set at the court of ʾĒsarḥaddōn

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[26] Porten and Yardeni 1993, 3:94ff., condensed. For the port in question, see 3:xx-xxi.

[27] On Jewish scribal culture of the period, see Schams 1998.

[28] Or at least this is one way to construe the geographical connections that the record lays out; that there are possible scenarios, however, only foregrounds the complexity of the possible transimperial connections. For the satrapies of the Persian Empire, see Junge 1942; Toynbee 1954; Vogelgesang, 1992.

[29] For the Egyptian calendar, see Parker 1950; Depuydt 1977.

[30] See Bivar 1985.

[31] On the non-Aramaic technical terms in the account, see Yardeni 1994.

[32] For the economy of the Achemenid Empire, see Briant 1982; Silver 1985; Tuplin 1987; Briant and C. Herrenschmidt, eds.,1989; Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989.

[33] See van Dijk 1963: "[In the time of] King Esarhaddon, Aba-enlil-dari, [whom] the Arameans (*Aḫlamū*) call Aḫuʾaqari, was *ummānu*." More than one Akkadian bureaucrat, however, is recorded as bearing this name; for an alternative rendering of the name, see Fales 1994, who also argues that the list in question, from the Seleukid era, retrospectively inserts this *ummānu* to give the fictional character a historical foundation. See Weigl 2010, 8 n. 23.

[34] For philological distinctions between the two parts of the composition, see Kottsieper 1990.

[35] Genesis 39ff.; see, inter alia, Niditch and Doran 1977.

[36] See Lindenberger 1983; Greenfield 1998; Weigl 2010.

(681–669 BCE) in Ninwe,[37] recounts the vicissitudes of ᵓAḥīqar, a "wise and skillful scribe"—from Yĕhud, according to Greek ancillary sources[38]—who, despite the Assyrian deportation of Israel's ten northern tribes (ca. 720 BCE), not only "became counselor of all ᵓAṯūr and keeper of [ᵓĒsarḫaddōn's] seal": the king ordered that "all the troops of ᵓAṯūr should rely on his decrees (מלוהי)." Powerful but childless, ᵓAḥīqar grooms his clever nephew Nādin to become his successor (ברי זי לא ברי)[39] though once appointed to ᵓĒsarḫaddōn's court, Nādin forges documents that impugn ᵓAḥīqar of plotting to "subvert the land against the king", most malificently—in less lacunose Aramaic versions of the tale[40]—false letters enjoining the Šāh of Īrān and Pharaᶜoh of Egypt to converge upon Ninwe under arms, respectively, in a totalizing geographic fantasm, from East and West.[41] The incriminating epistles adduced, ᵓAḥīqar escapes forfeiting his head only through the beneficence of the executioner who, concealing the sage in a subterranean vault, produces the body of a decapitated slave instead.[42] Nonetheless, Nādin's political triumph proves short-lived: bereft of ᵓAḥīqar's instructions, ᵓĒsarḫaddōn regrets the precipitateness with which he had "the father of all ᵓAṯūr" dispatched.[43] When Nādin's treason comes to light, ᵓAḥīqar reascends from the pit, whence the king gratefully restores "the master (בעל) of good counsel" to his rightful office, where his first act is to throw the turncoat Nādin into prison. There Nādin passes his days, listening to royal scribes recite the adages that he refused to countenance in his career, in fact the very set of apothegms which follow seriatim directly on the tale—אלה מלי:[44] "Choose the sayings (מלין) you shall utter, then speak them to your brother to assist him. For the treachery of the mouth is more dangerous than the treachery of battle."[45]

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[37] Or perhaps Bābilim; ᵓĒsarḫaddōn moved the Assyrian capital from Ninwe to Bābilim. Recensions vary as to which of these cities marks the locus for the action, though in terms of symbolic geography their significance remains the same; see Salvesen 1968.

[38] Tobit 1:21ff. See further, Greenfield 1981; Ruppert 1976; Cazelles 1951.

[39] Nādin: cf. Heb. נתן, "to give"; on the ambivalence of the gift, see Mauss 2007; Haselstein 2000.

[40] See Nau 1909.

[41] While Assyria never succeeded in absorbing Īrān or Egypt into its empire, readers of the 5th century B.C. would certainly have recognized Bābilim/Ninwe as centered within the Achaemenid domain, while Persia and Egypt represent its outer limits.

[42] The Elephantine redaction breaks off at this point. For the reconstruction of the conclusion, see Lindenberger 1983.

[43] Porten and Yardeni 1993, 3:32.

[44] Cf. אלה הדברים (Latin: Deuteronomium).

[45] Porten and Yardeni 1993, 3:36.

Not only, then, do the Customs Account and the Romance of *ᵓAḥīqar* adumbrate the same geopolitical horizons: the tax records exemplify the basic sorts of economic transactions upon which the administrative, political, and military organization of the empire that the narrative imagines rests, where the "ᵓAṯūr" of the tale—by the mid-fifth century BCE—functions principally as a trope for the Achaemenid regime. That a provincial scribe, stationed at the outposts of the Achaemenid domain should redact (כתב[46]) a tale about the meteoric rise of a fellow Aramaean who becomes not only master of his profession, but chief official at the court of ᵓĒsarḥaddōn (< Akk. *Aššūr-aẖ-iddina*, "Aššur has given me a brother"), speaks for itself as fantasmatic inspiration.[47] Above all, however, what the Romance of *Aḥīqar* idealizes is the potential for mobility—geographic, social, and economic—within the Assyro-Achaemenid tributary state. Under ᵓĒsarḥaddōn, therefore, the scribal calling not only appears as a *carrière ouverte à tout talent*; unlike Mārēdāḥai in the closely related Hebrew *ᵓEsṯēr*, ᵓAḥīqar's enemies are not "ᶜĂmālēqites"—the archetypal assailants who attempt to obstruct the Hebrew people in their pilgrimage from Egypt to Sīnai[48]—but his own Aramaic kin: Assyrians of all classes, from executioner to king, prove ᵓAḥīqar's greatest champions at court, in effect to emphasize that within the multiethnic arena of the empire—be it in Egypt, Aššūr, or Elam—foreigners were as often as not allies, well-wishers, and friends. So ᵓAḥīqar (< *ᵓaḥī-yāqar*, "my brother is precious") questions in the adages:

> My own son spied out my house, what shall I say to strangers? He bore false witness against me; who, then, will declare me innocent? My poisoner came from my own house; before whom can I press my complaint?[49]

Lest the litigant avail himself, however, too hastily of imperial redress, ᵓAḥīqar concomitantly stresses, "A king's word is gentle, but keener and more cutting than a double-edged sword … His anger is swifter than lightening: look out for yourself!"[50] Here we see the importance of the Sayings (מלי)

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[46] See below, p. 40.

[47] In the wake of Sēnnĕḥērīḇ's deportation of the Northern Israelite state in the generation immediately preceding ᵓĒsarḥaddōn, it also becomes possible to read the *Tale of Aḥīqar* as a type of nationalist allegory; cf. *mutatis mutandis* Jameson 1986.

[48] See Exod. 17; Esther 3:1; Smith 1997.

[49] Porten and Yardeni 1993, 3:42.

[50] Ibid. 3:36.

to the Romance as a whole: distilling the distinctive plotting of the narrative into a set of ideological propositions that—in contrast to the *miṣwot̠* of ʾ*Ēlleh šĕmot̠*—appear, as Louis Althusser has put it, "to have no history in themselves,"[51] they allow the tale to circulate throughout the empire in its entirety as a parable, ubiquitously valid irrespective of time, ethnicity, or place.[52] Just as the triumph of the protagonist at the court of ʾĒsarḫaddon vouches for the aptitude of ʾAḥīqar's adages as "wisdom" (חכמתא),[53] so the apothegms—which retain no more than superficial local references[54]—asymmetrically allow the narrative to exceed its function as an historical account of the *splendeurs et misères* of an Assyrian imperial career.

II

The *Life of ʾAḥīqar*, Eduard Meyer aptly observed, is "the oldest book of world literature, internationally diffused through the most disparate tongues and diverse peoples."[55] Over the next two millennia, in fact, scribes successively augmented the novel, as they translated the tale, together with its apothegms, into all the major languages of culture around the Mediterranean and across the Middle East: Demotic (Egyptian), Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic, Ethiopic, Greek, Old Makedonian, Serbian, Rumanian, Russian, Turkish, Latin.[56] What propels this worlding of the *Life of ʾAḥīqar*, however, in which no two redactions precisely correspond, issues less from the vagaries of literary taste, than from devices that are intrinsic to its narrative per se and hence autopoietic.[57] Not only does the *ꜣbw* papyrus emplot the story of what Lawrence Wills calls the "counselor in the court of the foreign king,"[58] redacted specifically for a displaced community within the multicultural conglomeration that constituted the Achaemenid state:[59] the *Life of ʾAḥīqar*—

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[51] Althusser 1971, 159-62.

[52] For Aramaic as the *lingua franca* of the Persian Empire, see Frye 1955; Beyer 1986.

[53] See Weigl 2010.

[54] Cf. the references to the deities Shamash and El—some scholars take these to be traces of an earlier Akkadian *Vorlage*, others as superficial references designed to link the apothegms to the Assyrian setting of the tale; see Lindenberger 1985.

[55] Meyer 1912, 128; cf. Weigl 2010, 1-11. For the diffusional patterning, see below XXX.

[56] For details, see Conybeare 1898; Nau 1909; Contini and Grottanelli 2005, 11-49.

[57] On "worlding", see Connery and Wilson 2007. On "autopoiesis", see especially Luhmann 1990 and Mingers 1994.

[58] Wills 1990. Cf. also Gruen 1998.

[59] The best overview remains Briant 1996.

specifically thematizes the prismatic confrontation that the Īrānian empire afforded between the polities of Aššur, Egypt, and Yĕhud, capitalizing in an unprecedented way on an ethnically diverse constellation of heretofore institutionally specific genres[60]—Mesopotamian sapiential literature, the Egyptian tomb autobiography, Old Israelite historical narration, the Iōnian political anecdote,[61] and so forth. Hence the text not only affords an occasion for the interplay between speech genres peculiar to the dominant, if also heteroglossic, Īrānian regime[62]—the language of the introductory narrative, for instance, and the language of the adages represent two different geohistorical layerings of Old Aramaic, the first the diplomatic idiom of the Western satrapies, the second a more archaic, literary dialect attested further East.[63] Concomitantly, the novel interweaves in a subtly polyphonic way culturally heterogenous literary types drawn from precisely those peoples that figure in the tale.[64] Like the empire which the novel represents, then, the Old Aramaic *Life of ʾAḫ̣īqar* is nothing so much as a site for the cohabitation, condensation, and displacement of ethnically specific genres,[65] whose imbrication propels the reader from one culturally embedded literary formation to the next.[66] The reception history of the narrative, as scribes recast it from one language and one community to another, is thus nothing more than the historical realization of the devices of culturo-linguistic crossing that are already thematized and enacted in the *ꜣbw*-papyrus itself.

Most salient here is the splice that the novel makes between the imperial intrigue of the tale and the sapiential counsel of the dicta, which situates *ʾAḫ̣īqar* at the crossroads of what contemporary Hellenic writers in Iōnia (*Yaunā*) had already begun to distinguish as *politiká* over and against *philosophía*.[67] If the novel sutures these two realms—the political and the sapiential—it also keeps them formally distinct, which inevitably begs the question of the relationship between them. In the first instance, their collaboration is reciprocal: the Assyrian (or Īrānian) court provides the political context which produced the apothegms, while the apothegms reprise the particularities of an Assyro-Īrānian imperial career under the apprehension of the universal.[68] Historically, however, it is not difficult to see that these two regimes, in their reciprocity, are actually isomorphic. Structurally, the politico-economic organization of the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary state constituted the double of Iōnian philosophic speculation.

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[60] For details, see Contini and Grottanelli 2005.

[61] See Dorati 1995; Selden 1999.

[62] Bakhtin 1975 and 1979: “heteroglossia”, “speech genres”.

[63] Greenfield 1978, esp. 97.

[64] Cf. Bakhtin 1972: “polyphony”.

[65] Freud 1900: “condensation”, “displacement”.

[66] Selden 1994, ad finem: “syllepsis”.

[67] See, for example, Minar 1942; Procopé 1989. So Prodikos speaks of the “boundary (μεθόρια) between the man of philosophy and the man of politics” [=Diels-Kranz 1951, fr. 84 B 6].

Thus, barely a generation before the redaction of the Old Aramaic, *ʾAḥīqar*, Dārayavauš I (Greek: Dareios [ca. 549–486 BCE]) had reorganized the inherited tripartite socio-political system of the *Pārsā* into the two-tiered imperial structure that became the basis for the Achaemenid tributary state,[69] which in Old Persian itself had no proper name. At the local level, individual cities, countries, federations, and allied peoples (e.g., *Sakai*) retained their own traditional forms of government, religion, custom, and coin. Without attempting to homogenize them, geographically proximate peoples were then grouped into twenty distinct provinces (*xšaθra-*, cognate with Greek *ktáomai*, "to possess"), so that a single satrapy might include populations as diverse as Thrakians, Phrygians, Paphlagonians, Mariandynians, and Syrians.[70] Each of these administrative districts was in turn overseen by a "protector" (*xšaθra-pāvan-*, cognate with Greek *poimēn*, "shepherd") who reported directly to administrative Aryan nobles and, ultimately, to the "Leader of Leaders" (*xšāyaθiya xšāyaθiyānām*), that is, to the Great King himself. Tribute, in kind, coin, or manpower, comprised both a complex set of levies—fixed by the central government ad hoc—as well as gifts determined by the communities themselves. These the local populations collected according to their own traditions, to bestow upon the satrap who, in turn, passed on the revenues expected by the king. Other, less regulated forms of duty went to the satrap himself, who might have very different relations with the different communities under his care.[71] None of the surviving evidence suggests that the central Īrānian administration returned anything directly to the subject territories as investment for future economic growth. The crown did, however, redistribute revenue throughout empire to build bridges, maintain passable roads, oversee the post, regularize measures and tolls, and secure military protection—all of which facilitated communication between diffused populations and fostered transimperial trade.[72]

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[68] Cf. Hegel 1971, 1:115-209.

[69] For the transition from the tripartite Indo-European organization of the *Pārsā*, see Benveniste 1969, 279-373; Dumézil 1945.

[70] Herodotus 3.90. Cf. Petit 1990.

[71] For a relevant case study, see Fried 2004; Cataldo 2009.

[72] For documentation, see Cook 1985.

Even in the short run—in particular by 475 BCE—Dārayavauš's administrative reforms enabled a relatively integrated politico-economic system, which nonetheless gave rise to one fundamental contradiction: the persistence of local communities under government support, led simultaneously to their negation by the imperial apparatus of the Achaemenid state.[73] Dārayavauš represents this dialectic concretely in the inscriptions erected at Pārsa (Persepolis < Greek: *Persēs polis*) which memorialize his reign. On the one hand, golden tablets from the *apadāna*, the audience chamber that dominates the royal terrace, portray his kingdom fantasmatically as an integrated space, vouchsafed to him by the one high Īrānian god Ahura Mazdā, radiating symmetrically around his capital and held together by his transroyal power.[74] At the same time, however, stone blocks set into the terrace's enclosure wall describe this geographic space as filled by an open-ended series of discrete peoples without integral connection or territorial hierarchization:

> King Dārayavauš declares: This is the realm (*xšaçam*) that I possess (*dārayāmiy*), from the Skythians who are beyond Sogdiana to Kush, from Sind to Sardis—which Ahura Mazdā has bestowed upon me. May he protect … my royal home (*viθam*, cognate with Greek *(w)oikos* "house"; Latin *vīcus*, "group of dwellings"; Sanskrit *viś-*, "community, people") [DPh 3-10].

> King Dārayavauš declares: These are the peoples (*dahyu-*, cognate with Sanskrit *dásyu-* "alien, demon, foreign slave") whom I hold, along with the Persian folk (*kārā*, also: "army")—they who have feared me and brought me tribute (*bājim* < Sanskrit *bhága-*, "portion"): the Elamite, the Mede, the Babylōnian, the Arab, the Assyrian, the Egyptians, the Armenian, the Kappadokian, the Lydian, the Greeks who are on land and those who are on the sea, and the peoples who are beyond the sea; the Asagartian, the Parthian, the Drangianian, the Arian, the Baktrian, the Sogdian, the Khawrezmian, the Sattagydian, the Arakhōsian, the Indian, the Gandhārian, the Skythians, the Makians [DPe 5-18].[75]

Dārayavauš's imperium, then, sustained itself through two mutually contradictory political impulses: on the one hand, a unified state (*xšaça*) within whose boundaries all local particularities were resolved into a homogenous imperial space; on the other, an eclectic agglomeration of alien communities (*dahyāva*), which persisted as irregular, arbitrary, and potentially refractory components of an always as yet untotalized empire.

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[73] Cf. Amin 1973.

[74] On Achaemenid religion, see Stausberg 2002-04, 1:154-86.

[75] Kent 1953, 136-37; Lecoq 1997. For the dialectic, see Amin 1973.

Precisely the same years that saw this political reconfiguration concomitantly witnessed the "axial breakthrough", notably in Avestan literature from eastern Īrān,[76] Hebraic prophecy in Israel and Babylōn,[77] and Iōnian philosophy in the Western provinces of Dārayavauš's state.[78] Whatever the differences in their institutionalization, Mazdean *daēnā*, Biblical *nĕḇuˀāh*, and Greek *metaphysiká* all evince, as Benjamin Schwartz appositely puts it, a "strain[ing] towards the transcendental,"[79] which, as Björn Wittrock observes, inevitably brought with it "a new sense of the potentials for humans to change the world, to act and to reach beyond the limits of the immediately given."[80] The political connections are most complex, but also clearest, in Iōnian *philosophía*. At this time, city-states such as Milētos (the home of Thalēs, Anaximandros, Anaximenēs, and probably Leukippos too) and Ephesos (where Hērakleitos and his students worked) constituted part of the Īrānian satrapy of *Yaunā*, and hence paid regular tribute to the Great King. So did Samos, Pythagoras's birthplace, where he spent his formative years before migrating to Krotōn in the West. Particularly important for the diffusion of Iōnian ideas, moreover, was Anaxagoras of Klazomenai—another Īrānian dependency—who came with Xšayāršā's army to Athēnai in 480 BCE, where over the next thirty years he not only became the teacher and friend of Periklēs, but so impressed his character on the whole course of future philosophical investigation in the city that fourth-century writers looked back on him as the very type of the theoretic man.[81] Contemporaries whom he may have met there include Prōtagoras and Dēmokritos, both of Abdera, a city-state then part of Īrānian *Skudra*—tradition has it that Dēmokritos' father entertained Xšayāršā (519–486 BCE) and his entourage on their return to Asia—as well as Diogenēs of Phrygian Apollōnia, a town likewise administered as part of the province that Dārayavauš refers to as "Those who are beside the sea" (*Tyaiy drayahyā*).[82] Strabo, moreover, notes that following the precedent of Thalēs and Dēmokritos, Platōn studied during his formative years in the Īrānian satrapy of Egypt (*Mudrāya*),[83] while Aristotelēs, after leaving the Akadēmeia, spent his first period of independence working in the sometime Īrānian tributary states of Lesbos and Makedonia.[84] That Platōn's great disciple was said to have described his master "as a re-embodiment of Zaraθustra, who, he held, had lived 6000 years earlier," retains, for all its metempsychotic extravagance, its own measure of truth.[85]

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[76] For a succinct and lucid introduction, see Stausberg 2005; Skjævø 2011.

[77] See Assmann 2008, 76-89

[78] Eisenstadt 1986, 1-124.

[79] Schwartz 1975, 3-4.

[80] Arnason, et al. 2005, 51.

[81] See Diels-Kranz 1951, 59 A 1-27.

[82] Behistun I, 15 = Kent 1953, 117.

For Hellenic thinkers, the progression from wisdom literature (*sophía*), as we find it, for example, in the apothegms of *ʾAḥīqar* to philosophical *phronēsis* was one of gradual development—the beginning and culmination of a common theoretical endeavor.[86] It should come as no surprise, then, that "Greek" philosophy—particularly as consolidated from Thalēs through Platōn and Aristotelēs—should have an integral connection with the political economy of the Achaemenid empire.[87] All such epistemological questions as the integration of perceptual diversity into concepts and categories of the mind; the search for the essence of diverse phenomena within a single overriding principle or *arkhē* ("origin"/"sovereignty"); the relationship of particular to universal, accident to essence, part to whole; the transcendental attempt to bridge the gap between the manifold of things and the One that allows for their existence—all such topics, whatever place they occupy in the internal evolution of Hellenic thought,[88] have also to be understood as so many attempts to theorize the peculiar structural characteristics of the tributary mode of production, in particular the incongruous fit between individual, community, satrapy, and empire in its simultaneous affirmation and negation of dependent polities.[89] In his synthetic exposition of the Platōnic-Aristotēlian tradition, Plotinos, an Egyptian Neoplatonist writing under Roman rule (ca. 204–270 CE), makes this connection particularly clear:

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[83] Strabo 17.29. See Diop 1981.

[84] The fundamental survey of these facts in English remains Burnet 1930.

[85] Boyce 1984, 15. The Platonic dialogue *Alkibiadēs* refers to the "*mageia* of Zōroastros, son of Hōromazos" (122a), while the younger Seneca reports that magi in Athens sacrificed at Plato's tomb (*Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 58.31). That the notion of a cycle of rebirths (*samsara*) emerges in the Indic *Brāhmaṇas*, but remains foreign to Zoroastrianism altogether is significant in dating Zaraθuštra's break from the common Indo-Aryan tradition; see Clark 1998, 19-20. For potential connections between Platonic and Avestan ideas, see Modi 1922; Chroust 1980.

[86] See Aristotle, *On Philosophy*, fr. 8 Ross; Day, et al. 1995; Kurke 2011, 93-124.

[87] *Pace* Kant 1977, 450-57, and Hegel 1993-95, 411-579; cf. West 1971.

[88] Cf. *in primis* Vernant 1969.

[89] For the projection of Persian tributary system as the economic universal, see Ps.-Aristotle, *Economics* 2.1.

> What is the comprehensive principle of coordination? … All things must be enchained (συνηρτῆσθαι δὴ δεῖ ἀλλήλοις τὰ πάντα); and the sympathy and correspondence obtained in any one closely knit organism must exist, first and most intensely, in the All. There must be one principle constituting this unity of many forms of life and enclosing the several members within the unity (ἐκ πάντων ἕν), while at the same time, precisely as in each thing of detail the parts too have each a definite function (καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ παντὶ ἕκαστα ἔργα ἕκαστον ἔχειν), so in the All … each several member must have its own task … Thus each entity takes its origin from one principle and, therefore, while executing its own function, works in with every other member of that All from which its distinct task has by no means cut it off (συμβάλλει δὲ ἄλλο ἄλλῳ· οὐ γὰρ ἀπήλλακται τοῦ ὅλου): each performs its act, each receives something from the others, every one has its own moment bringing its touch of sweet or bitter.[90]

We have only to replace the "All" here with "Šāhānšāh" (or, "Imperator Romanorum") to see that whatever its philosophical pretensions, the passage is also an idealized description of the relationship between the ruler and the non-homogenized agglomeration of the tributary state in which every subject people contributed diversely to the imperium at large without abrogating the particularities of local practice.[91] Far from a return to the real, then, multiculturalism turns out to be a wholly metaphysical undertaking.[92] What Plotinos leaves us unable to decide, however, is whether the divine order is simply a projection of this temporal condition, or whether the celestial hierarchy is what validates and legitimizes the structure of temporal authority.[93]

It is no coincidence, moreover, that Plotinos' vision of mutual "articulation" (*sunērtēsthai*) also provides a generalized description of the generic play internal to the Old Aramaic *ʾAḥīqar*, in which each geohistorical literary type contributes complementarily to the novel as a whole without thereby obliterating the particularities of scribal practice that continued to thrive locally in Aššur, Egypt, and Yehud. There is thus, *mutatis mutandis*, a fundamental complicity between the politico-economic structure of the

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[90] Plotinus, *Enneads* II, 3.7. Translation: MacKenna 1992, modified.

[91] Cf. Marion 1977, secs. 13-19.

[92] Haselstein, et al. 2010. I would like to thank Ulla Haselstein for helping me clarify this point.

[93] The Īrānian example suggests that it is not the "transcendental vision … [that] gave rise to extensive re-ordering of the internal contours of societies" (Eisenstadt 1984, 1), but rather the reverse.

Achaemenid state; Ionian philosophy, which in time came deeply to inform all of Īrānian imperial thought;[94] and the new novels that began to circulate within the borders of Dārayavauš's empire shortly after his reforms, of which the *Tale of ᵓAḥīqar* from *3bw* is but the earliest extant example. In fact, it would not be too much to say that under the Achaemenid Empire and its successors, the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary state produced as its dominant ideology what Aristotelēs called "metaphysics" (τὰ μετα τὰ φυσικά > "that which lies beyond physics"), and, as its chief form of literary expression, the ancient novel.[95] In distinction, then, to the separatism thematized in *ᵓĒlleh šĕmoṯ* and *ᶜEzĕrāᵓ-Nĕḥemĕyāh*, what the *Life of ᵓAḥīqar* ultimately figures—in all of its multiform redactions—is precisely this more complex set of economic, ideological, and literary conjunctures (*agencements*).[96]

III

Historically, the Achaemenid empire was the first of a series of successive Levantine-Mediterranean tributary states, all of which not only covered roughly the same ground, portions thereof, or territorial expansions: each adapted Dārayavauš's politico-economic model to changing historical circumstances and provided the parameters in which Hellenistic metaphysics—be it in pagan, Jewish, Christian, or Islamic guise—continued to flourish.[97] Makedonia, Rome, Ērānšahr, Byzantion, the Caliphates, Büyük Selçuklu Devleti—these were the tributary states which produced the great novels of antiquity, and within whose borders they circulated freely across linguistic lines from one subject community to another.[98] Alongside the *Life of ᵓAḥīqar*, the most prominent of these works included *The Confession and Prayer of Aseneth*,[99] *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*,[100] the *Acts of Pétros*,[101] *Barlaam and Jo-*

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[94] See Reale 1991; Gutas 1998.

[95] The locus classicus for such connections is Marx 1953; cf. also Eagleton 1978 and 1991.

[96] See Deleuze and Parnet 2002, 51ff.

[97] For the continuity between paganism and the "peoples of the book", rather than the break stressed by Patristic historiography, see Athanassiadi and Frede 1999.

[98] Up through the eighteenth centure CE, the Ottoman Empire still collected tribute in almost exactly the manner as had the Persians; see, for example, Løkkegaard 1950; Murphey 1987; Coşgel 2004.

[99] Burchard 1965; Kraemer 1998.

[100] Kinoshita 2008.

[101] Thomas 2003.

asaph,[102] the *Seven Wise Masters*,[103] *Alf layla wa-layla*,[104] *Vis o Rāmin,*[105] the *Life of Aisōpos,*[106] *Leylī o Majnūn.*[107] If we look, however, for the most popular and widespread work of this period—the "supreme fiction", as it were, of the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary state and its attendant ideology of metaphysics—it does not turn out to be the Bible, or the *Aeneid*, or the *Qur'ān*, nor indeed any of the expected texts that continue to circulate today: in fact, it is the *Alexander Romance*, which Ken Dowden accurately singles out as "antiquity's most successful novel,"[108] a work that survives in several dozen languages and well over a hundred different versions, none of which can claim to be original or definitive in form.[109] Its overtly patchwork makeup and continuous (re)composition,[110] in poetry as well as prose, is attested from the third century BCE through the nineteenth century CE,[111] across a geographical expanse that ranges from Afghanistan to Spain and Ethiopia to Iceland—that is, precisely the larger temporal and geographical coordinates of the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary states. Not only was the Alexander Romance the single most popular narrative for roughly a millennium and a half, in effect a protean network of interrelated texts disseminated over massive tracts of Asia, Africa, and Europe:[112] alone among fictions of the period, it was of sufficient stature to figure in all the major sacred texts that Christians, Muslims, Zoroastrians, and Jews produced during this era.[113] Significantly, it is not the *historical* Alexander that has entered these holy accounts, but the Alexander of the *romance* and, accordingly, there are not only pagan, but Jewish, Christian, Mazdean, and Islāmic versions of the tale.[114] Whereas the historical treatments of Alexander's life—which gain currency only relatively late—give us the facts of the man's military career,[115] what the Romance attempts to capture is the overall significance of Alexander's deeds for the tributary epoch, not the "accidents" of history, as it were, but rather their "essence"—what Aristotelēs called τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι: "the what-it-meant-to-be" Alexander.

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[102] Ikegami 1999, 13-65.

[103] Runte 1984; Foehr-Janssens 1994.

[104] Reynolds 2006; Irwin 2008, 9-102.

[105] Minorsky 1943-48 and 1962; Gallais 1974.

[106] Perry 1980; Karla 2001.

[107] Seyed-Gohrab 2003.

[108] Reardon 1989, 650.

[109] There is at present no general survey of all surviving versions of the Romance. The most up-to-date account of the Greek recensions and their historical vicissitudes Fraser 1996, 203-26; Jouanno 2002. Cf. also Carey 1956; Merkelbach 1977; Ross 1986; Stoneman 2007b. Greek texts: Stoneman 2007a.

[110] Cf. Stoneman 2003.

[111] The *terminus ante quem* for the material that makes up the core of the Romance is ca. 240 BCE, a date guaranteed by a citation from Teles the Cynic in Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 97.31. However, the oldest surviving recension of the narrative that has come down to us—represented by a single examplar: the eleventh-century Codex Parasinus graec. 1711—can be dated on philological grounds to ca. 300 CE; see Wyss 1942. For those portions of Roman imperial world which remained pre-capitalist up until the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt—in particular, Ethiopia and the lands under Ottoman hegemony—the Romance continued to circulate through the nineteenth century; see Budge 1968.

[112] For Demotic Egyptian as the earliest detectable stratum of the text, see Jasnow 1997.

Nor is the correspondence between the dissemination of the *Alexander Romance* and the tempero-geographic coordinates Levantine-Mediterranean tributary states coincidental. In fact, the Romance takes its point of departure from precisely the same nexus of sapiential and political concerns that already preoccupied the *Life of ˀAḥīqar*: Philippos II of Makedonia famously engaged Aristotelēs to tutor his son, Alexander, and, in the Romance, the philosopher figures either as the correspondent of his pupil, or accompanies his student on his expedition to the East. Moreover, what sparks Alexander's campaign in the Romance is his refusal to pay tribute to the Great King—"one hundred golden eggs each made up of twenty pounds of gold," according to the *Extraordinary and Truly Marvelous Account of King Alexander, Ruler of the World*[116]—in order to embark instead on forming a Makedonian tributary empire in the wake of the Achaemenid regime. Historically, Alexander's Īrānian antagonist was Dārayavauš III Artašata,[117] but collective memory has matched him with a more formidable opponent, the keen imperial reformer and redoubtable scourge of Greece, Dārayavauš I. So the Old Serbian redaction of the Romance opens playing fast and loose with chronology and lineage to locate its Makedonian—i.e., Balkan—hero less within the domain of historical exactitude, than within the register of cultural truth:

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[113] See Budge 1891; Kampers 1901; Czeglédy 1913; Anderson 1932; Pfister 1956 and 1976, 143-50, 175-76; idem., 143-50, 175-76; Kazis 1962, 1-25; Brown 1991, 69-94; Nigosian 1993, 30-32. Kant and Hegel's categorical separation of Zoroastrian doctrine from Western metaphysics turns out to have been premature; see, particularly, Dumézil 1945; Neusner 1986; Boyce 1987.

[114] See McInerny 2007.

[115] For the fragments of the early historians of Alexander the Great, Auberger 2001. For a balanced discussion of the priority of "imaginative" over "factual" accounts of Alexander's life, see Gunderson 1980.

[116] Stoneman 2007a, 1:278.

[117] For the name, see Briant 2003, 64-65.

> It came to pass … when Tarquin the Great ruled Rome and the priest and prophet Jeremiah reigned in Hebraic majesty among the Israelite people; when Darius, the son of Cyrus, ruled over the Lands of the East (вьсточнимь странамь), when Porus governed India, and Nectanebo ruled Egypt, a sorcerer and king, then Philip, who was a heathen and a Greek, ruled the land of Phrygia and the Macedonian earth (македонскои земли) and the Greek islands: at that time, a son was borne to him, and they named him Alexander.[118]

In kindred spirit, the Persian Is*kandarnāma* claims Aristotelēs as the author of its composition, which by implication makes the *Alexander Romance* one of the Greek metaphysician's authentic philosophic works.[119] Under Aristotelēs' tutelage, moreover, Alexander swiftly becomes the tributary potentate *par excellence*, who in short order reduces to dependency not only Europe, Africa, India, and the Middle East but, in some versions, Russia and China too. Thus the γ-recension of the Greek text states: "All nations became his servants and paid him tribute. Not one of them resisted, for they all feared him. He crossed all the land beneath the sun; no habitable portion remained thereover."[120] Similarly, the *Qiṣṣat Ḏī 'l-Qarnayn* records that Alexander subdued the earth from ياويل (*Yāwīl*) to تاويل (*Tāwīl*), an onomastic as well as a graphic pun in which the inversion of the points above and below the initial tooth (يـ / تـ) constitutes an icon of the specular totality of the world that Alexander came to rule.[121]

Most importantly, however, Alexander proves a shrewd tributary administrator, who fosters the independent welfare of his subject peoples, allowing each its own customs and traditions, privileging or homogenizing none. The Syriac *Tašᶜīṯo d-Aleksandros* stresses this explicitly: "Nation shall not be mingled with nation nor shall one man go from his own land to another except those who travel for the sake of merchandise, and even of these not more than ten or twenty shall be allowed to go … For we desire that prosperity and abundance should be in your land."[122] Accordingly, the Alexander of the Romance remains largely impartial when it comes to the logic of local culture,[123] a point that the Hebrew *Sēp̱er ᵓĂleksanĕdĕros Moqĕdon* makes in its account of his visit to Yĕrūšālayīm.[124] After admiring "the house of the great god (*hāᵓēl haggādol*) who tramples all nations beneath me," Alexander offers the High Priest ᶜĂnnānī "a large sum of gold to make a statue of himself and place it in the Temple of Yahweh as a sign and a remembrance." ᶜĂnnānī, however, admonishes the king: "We are forbidden to engrave a statue or an image in the House of God. Give the gold to the Temple treasury instead so that we may use it to maintain the poor and the crippled in the city." Alexander—in metaleptic contrast to Antiochus Epiphanēs and the emperor Gaius[125]—proves not only willing to accept instruction; the suggestion pleases him immensely: he weighs out forty talents of the finest gold and entrusts them to the good will of ᶜĂnnānī. The king then prostrates himself before the people and proclaims, "This is the House of God (*bēiṯ ᵓĔlōhīm*), and there is none like it in the world … Pray for me always."

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[118] Christians 1991, 32-34.

[119] Southgate 1978. Greek recensions attribute their authorship variously to Aristotle's nephew, Callisthenes of Olynthus, to Onesicritos, and—most interestingly—to Aesop; see Kroll 1926, xv-xvi.

[120] Von Lauenstein, et al., 1962-1969, 2:232.

[121] Zuwiyya 2001, ff. 92-103 (Arabic). On the Arabic Alexander, Doufikar-Aerts 2010.

[122] Budge 1889: English 82 (modified); Syriac 146-47.

There is a complement, however, to this story which casts Alexander's relation to the Temple in Yĕrūšālayīm in a somewhat darker light. So we read in the Tractate Yomāᵓ of the Talmud Bablī:

> Surely it was taught on Tannāᵓite authority: On the twenty-first day of the month of Ṭebeṯ is celebrated the day of Mount Gĕrīzzīm, on which it is forbidden to conduct a rite of mourning. It is the day on which the Ḵuṯīm sought the house of our God (*bēiṯ ᵓĔlohēnu*) from Alexander of Makedonia, intending to destroy it. He gave it to them.[126]

Behind this anecdote stands the centuries-long controversy between Yĕhudāh and Šomĕron [Grk: Samareia] over the place that Yahweh had selected to be his house of worship. Mošeh had enjoined: "Seek out the site (*māqom*) that Yahweh, your god, shall choose amidst your tribes as his habitation (*šiḵĕno*), to establish his name there. There you shall go and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and other sacrifices."[127] Yĕhudīm identified this site as Mount Morīyāh in Yĕrūšālayīm, but the schismatic Šomĕronīm [i.e., Ḵuṯīm] claimed Mount Gĕrīzzīm instead.[128] The difference not only had religious implications for the respective priesthoods, but serious political and economic consequences for the two peoples as well.[129] Hence Alexander's contradictory response— for the Yĕhudīm, he honors the Temple on Mount Morīyah, but for the Šomĕronīm ("Keepers") he acquiesces in its destruction—which, more than anything else, turns out to be an index to the magnanimity with which he supports each of his subject peoples' beliefs and sociopolitical endeavors. Thus, the Armenian *Patmut'iwn Aġek'sanri Makedonac'woy* stresses that what ultimately proves the key to Alexander's imperial success is the beneficence he shows to the diverse populations that he subjects: "Alexander, [you have] maintained [your] power by doing kindness to your friends … For not by war alone have you subdued the world and its people, but by great wisdom."[130]

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[123] Cf. Benedict 1934; Geertz 1983.

[124] Reich 1972, 68-70.

[125] See, respectively, 2 Maccabees 6:1-11 and Philo of Alexandria, *On the Embassy to Gaius* 30.203.

[126] bYoma 69a-b.

[127] Deut. 12:5-6.

[128] See Bowman 1977; Anderson and Giles 2002

Kandakē, the queen of Meroē, who delivers this eulogy upon unmasking the wily king, knows whereof she speaks. The Alexander portrayed in the Romances is less a power-hungry potentate than a sincere questor after philosophic truth which, for from being ethnically embedded, he takes from whatever place it comes. In good Peripatetic tradition, Alexander is curious about everything he comes across not only on, but also above and beneath, the earth. So, in the prose redaction of the Syriac homily (*mēmrā*) attributed to the great sixth-century poet Ya^{c}qūb Srūġāyā (ca. 451–521 CE), Alexander gives the following motivations for embarking on his world-conquering expedition:

> This thought has arisen in my mind, and I am wondering what is the extent of the earth, and how high the heavens are, and how many are the countries of my fellow kings, and upon what the heavens are fixed; whether thick clouds and winds support them, or whether pillars of fire rise up from the interior of the earth and bear the heavens so that they do not move for anything at all, or whether they depend on the beck of God and so do not fall. This now is what I desire to go and see: upon what the heavens rest, and what surrounds all creation.[131]

Not only does Alexander prove an avid teratologist who, in a steady stream of missives back to Makedonia, assiduously records the animal, vegetal, and mineral prodigies that he encounters imperturbably along the way; in the so-called "fabulous adventures", he constructs a bell-jar bathysphere in which he plumbs the ocean's depths, chains griffons to his chariot who fly him through the heavens, and marches his troops sheer across the Lands of Total Darkness: "Our friends," he confesses in the β-recension of the Greek text, "repeatedly urged us to turn back, but I was reluctant, because I wanted to see the limit of the earth."[132] Moreover, in his quest for consummate knowledge (*scire quid sit perfecta sapientia*), the Latin Alexander exchanges letters across the Ganga with the naked Brahmans, who admonish him to abandon his polytheistic ways, and "serve the one God, who alone reigns in heaven."[133] Not only in Christian, Judaic, and Islamic versions of the text does Alexander emerge a monotheist, but also in recensions that are basically pagan too. We even read in the *Iskandarnāma*: "Alexander carried with him thirty of the names of God. Every conquest Alexander made was by virtue of those names, which are in Hebrew."[134] Most Levantine versions of the Romance relate Alexander' long travails searching for the Waters of Life, and in the Syriac *Tašᶜīṯo*, he is actually allowed to "come within and see the Maker of all natures."[135] So in the Armenian redaction, Sarapis—recollected in Europe as *origo omnium deorum*[136]—predicts for him: "By dying and yet not dying, you shall come to me."[137]

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[129] See Weber 1921, 3:186ff.

[130] Wolohojian 1969, 81 and 139. Critical edition: Simonyan 1989.

[131] Budge 1889, 145 (translation modified); Syriac: 256.

Alexander' peregrinations around the world, then, are not simply a politico-economic venture, but simultaneously an unending metaphysical search, as if the two were superimposed one atop the other, and the Romance were the place that revealed the complicity between the two. It is thus possible to see not only how the *Alexander Romance* complicates the earlier *Life of ʾAḥīqar*,[138] but why this fiction above all others came to constitute the great novelistic expression of the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary era, whose expansive cosmopolitanism effectively turns the parochialism of such works as ᶜEzĕrāʾ-Nĕḥemĕyāh inside out. On the one hand, the Romance presents an idealized vision of empire—pieced together by the most charismatic leader that antiquity remembered—in which all the diverse communities of the inhabited world (οἰκουμένη) come to coexist side by side in "a peaceful unity (εἰρηνικῆς ἑνώσεως)," as Pseudo-Dionysius puts it, "which joins all [peoples] to itself and to each other (ἑνοῦσαν ἅπαντα ἑαυτῇ καὶ ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἀλλήλοις), preserving them in their distinctiveness (διασῴζουσαν πάντα ἐν ἀσυγχύτῳ) and yet linking them together in a universal and unconfused alliance."[139] On the other, this irenic socio-political order (*dār al-Tawḥīd / dār al-Salām*) turns out to be productive of the farthest reaching metaphysical science, in effect bridging "the chasm between the transcendental and the mundane" that had opened up historically with the advent of the axial age.[140] By a kind of Parsifalian logic, then, the suture that the *Life of ʾAḥīqar* stitched between the political and sapiential has now healed through the very forces that had torn it apart, so that the totality in all its multiplicity now reappears as one.[141] We see here, then, the importance of the fact that the hero of the novel is nominally a historical figure—a *point de capiton*, as Jacques Lacan would have it, anchored in the real[142]—and not a wholly fictional creation. To this end, the Greek *Life of Alexander the Makedonian* opens with an oracle that "the mighty and valorous king, who has fled Egypt in old age, will return at some future time a youth (μετὰ χρόνον νέος), … having circled the world (κόσμον κυκλεύσας), [in order to] bestow upon us the subordination of our enemies (ἐχθρῶν ὑποταγὴν διδούς)."[143] In this version of the Romance, Alexander is not only the hybrid offspring of Nektanebō, the last native king of Egypt, and Olympias, the Queen of Makedonia, bridging the Egyptian and the Greek:[144] as the prophetic once and future king (*rex quondam rexque futurus*), he stands, both as the guarantor that such a world had been realized in the past, and as a promise that—for this very reason—it remains continuously open to the future. Hence the utopian dimension of the novel, which not only represents Levantine-Mediterranean empire fantasmatically at its finest, but offers readers the vision of a differentiated world pacified and united where each community finds its proper place within the whole—though not without internal tension—as part of an ideal tributary order that is always henceforward yet to be achieved. Alexander, significantly enough, dies young—his yearning (*pothos*) as yet unfulfilled, his empire still in the process of consolidation—but his legacy to the world is hope.

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[132] Bergson 1965, 131 (II.37).
[133] Hilka and Steffens 1979, 180 and 192.
[134] Southgate 1978, 35.
[135] Budge 1889, 127.
[136] Hilka and Steffens 1979, 234.
[137] Wolojian 1969, 54.
[138] For Alexander in the wisdom literature tradition, see Doufikar-Aerts 2010, 93-133.

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[139] Ps.-Dionysius, *On Divine Names* 949c = Suchla, et al., 1990-91, 1:218-19.

[140] Eisenstadt 1986, 3.

[141] Cf. Wagner 1897, 363: "Mit disem Zeichen bann' ich deinen Zauber: | wie die Wunde er schließe, | die mit ihm du schlugest – | in Trauer und Trümmer | stürze die trügende Pracht!" (*Parsifal* II, ad finem).

[142] Lacan 1981.

[143] Stoneman 2007a, 10.

[144] On Greece and Egypt as conceptual opposites, see Froidefond 1971; Vasunia 2001.

IV

Virgil’s *Aeneis* may have bequeathed to Medieval and Modern Europe its basic myth for the Westering of culture, but it did so only at the expense of the imperial East, which it either represents as always already in ruins (*Troia*), or rejects as a site of luxuriance and moral decay (*Karthago*).[145] By contrast, the irrepressible *Alexander Romance* succeeded in uniting readers across the better part of the Eurasian and North African land mass for over a millennium and a half: this is the classic narrative—and not Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa* (ca. 450 BCE), ar-Rāwīya’s *Muᶜallaqāt* (ca. 750 CE), or Rustaveli’s *Vepxist’q’aosani* (ca. 1200 CE)—that Mongols, Arabs, Ethiopians, and Scots all read and which fired their collective imaginary.[146] In part, the worlding of the Romance is due to the fact that, beyond the accidence of scribal error, no two manuscripts of the novel are identical: rather, in keeping with the spirit of the tale, each community or nation harbored its own version of the story which, despite all local particularities, still participated in the oecumenical literary venture as a whole. Scriptural systems of this magnitude constitute discrete—if ultimately also overlapping—“text networks”,[147] autopoietic bodies of related compositions (“multiples”) whose origins largely escape us and whose evolution in the Late Antique still remained far from complete.[148] Within such self-organizing fields, however, neither origin nor terminus was much at issue: so the Masoretic Bible opens emblematically with ב, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet,[149] and breaks off open-endedly with the exhortation *wĕyāᶜal* (“May he go up”).[150] In fact, what most typified the scriptural networks of the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary period—not only ᵓ*Aḥīqar* and *Alexander*, but also *Hēnok̲*, the *Life of Aisōpos*, or the *Apothegmata Patrum*—was not their stability, but rather their set (*Einstellung*) towards proliferation, where entropy increased in the course of each new (re)inscription.[151] Hence the vast majority of such writings were not only pseudepigraphic—so among the ᵓĂmorāᵓīm the verb *kātab̲* does not mean “he composed”, but rather “he transcribed":[152] such protocols tended to accrete either seriatim, like the sequential religious recastings of the *Barlaam and Joasaph* as it emerged out of India, across central Asia, and down through the Middle East,[153] or cumulate rhizomatically around a narrative core, in the way that *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah* continually attracted new or variant fables to its orbit.[154] With no *Urtext* and lacking any definitive redaction, text networks of this sort remained fundamentally decentered, which makes it virtually impossible to chart with any certainty either their historical development or their full global diffusion. Faced, moreover, with contradictory renditions, each member of the text network figured—as Augustine put it—*in regione dissimilitudinis*,[155] that is, by way of similarity to and difference from the other works that concomitantly comprised the field—in effect a transtextual projection of Saussure's synchronic notion of linguistic "value".[156] Thus when ʾAbū 'l-Qāsim Ferdowsī (935–1020 CE) made Sekandar the brother of Dārā in his *Shāh-nāma*, and hence half Īrānian, this signifies against the fact that earlier versions of the Romance almost always describe him as the son of Nektanebō (< 𓂡𓅃𓎰𓏏𓊖 *Nḫt-Ḥr-(n)-Ḥbj.t*), and hence half Egyptian,[157] though Balkan redactions assert that he was the legitimate son of Philippos II, and hence of pure Makedonian stock. On the horizon of the fifteenth century CE, therefore, all of these divergent renderings explicitly held—as T. S. Eliot maintained —"a simultaneous existence and compose[d] a simultaneous order,"[158] which, insofar as the complex was autopoietic, also remained dynamically tensive.[159]

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[145] In Virgil’s moral geography, Carthage, settled by Phoinikians, still figures the East; cf. Hexter 1992.

[146] Cf., for example, Cleaves 1959; Budge 1968; Barbour 1971.

[147] Selden 2009.

[148] Cf. Thomas 2003.

[149] Cf., inter alia, Genesis Rabbah 1.10f.

[150] II Chronicles 36:23.

[151] II Chronicles 36:23.

The text network constituted the most common type of diffusional patterning for the ancient novel, which countenanced little divide in this regard between fiction, history, philosophy and religion.[160] Even such works as *as-Sindibād al-Baḥri*, which circulated primarily within the Arabic tongue,[161] gave rise to complex scriptural systems of this sort. It is against the backdrop of the multiple, therefore, that we need to understand such singular and largely uniform works as the five “ideal” Greek romances (Kharitōn, Xenophōn of Ephesos, Akhilleus Tatios, Longos, Hēliodōros), as well as Petronius’ *Satyrika* and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, all of which originated under Roman imperial rule.[162] Fundamentally, the one mode of composition constitutes the dialectical negation of the other. Whereas the Latin *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis* opens, for example, with the anonymous *feruntur* (“they say”),[163] and circulated without attribution, *Kallirhoē* (first century CE) , the earliest of the Greek novels,[164] begins with a signature, naming the author of the novel and foregrounding the act of his narration:

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[152] Wyrick 2004, 51-58.

[153] Ikegami 1999, 13-65.

[154] Bickell 1981, i-cxlvii.

[155] Augustine, *Confessiones* 7.10.

[156] Saussure 1980, 155-69; Trubetzkoy 1939.

[157] Firdousi 1866, 5:48-264.

[158] Eliot 1975, 38. Cf. Guillén 1971.

[159] Mantur and Varela 1975.

[160] Cf. Bowersock 1997; Sinha 2008. For the full range of ancient narrative types that constitute text networks, see Selden 2009. An instructive example here is the complex scriptural network of the hagiographic Life of Pachomius; see Veilleux 1980-82.

[161] Perry 1960.

> Χαρίτων ’Αφροδισιεύς, ’Αθηναγόρου τοῦ ῥήτορος ὑπογραφεύς, πάθος ἐρωτικὸν ἐν Συρακούσιας γενόμενον διηγήσομαι.
>
> My name is Kharitōn, of Aphrodisias, and I am clerk to the attorney Athenagoras. I am going to tell you the story of a love affair that took place in Syracuse. (I, 1)[165]

Kharitōn (“Of the Graces”), a writer nowhere else attested, may well be a pseudonym,[166] a device to credit the novel’s composition to a private individual, whose identifying credentials—name, city of residence, occupation—the narrative finds itself accordingly obliged to divulge. In good Aristotēlian fashion, moreover, Kharitōn asserts both the unity of the novel’s action (*pathos erōtikon*), along with its unity of place (Syrakousai).[167] The work survives in a single manuscript,[168] and there is no evidence either for widespread distribution of the novel, or that it circulated in any language other than Greek. This singularity, then, evident at so many levels of the composition, effectively functions as a refusal of the text network where, in its multiformity, even such well-known writers as Nezāmī-ye Ganjavī (1141-1209 CE) or Alexandre de Bernay (late twelfth century CE), contemporaries who composed poetical accounts of the Great Conqueror in Ādurbādagān and Normanz respectively, situated their work within the broader spectrum of the Alexander literary traditions.

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[162] Reliable overviews of this corpus include Swain 1999; Schmeling 2003; Whitmarsh 2008.

[163] Stoneman 2007a, 356.

[164] Tilg 2010.

[165] Translation: B. Reardon, in Reardon 1989, 21.

[166] Cf. Rohde 1876, 488-89.

[167] Aristotle, *Poetics*.

[168] See Reardon 2004, xxii.

Negation likewise determines both character and plot in *Kallirhoē*, which—as opposed to the explicitly public parameters of *ʾAḥīqar* or *Alexander*—narrows its focus to a private love affair between two otherwise unknown Syrakousans.[169] In effect, then, the Iōnian Kharitōn, writing from the Roman province of Asia, chooses as his subject the erotic interests of two Dorians from the West, thereby notionally encompassing the entirety of the "Panhellenic" world.[170] The very constriction of this focus, then, served—among other things—to interpellate Greek literati (πεπαιδευμένοι) as a distinct community of readers over and against other ethnically diverse, trans-imperial audiences for the novel,[171] in part through the narrative's pointed promotion of Greek language, identity, and values.[172] Not for nothing then, Kharitōn's novel skirts classical Greek history, taking as its principal referent Hermokratēs of Syrakousai, the Greek commander who not only famously repelled the Athēnian attack on Sikelia in 415–413 BCE, but went on to rout Karthaginian forces under Ḥannibaᶜal in 408. Set against Hermokratēs' efforts to safeguard Syrakousan patrial *dēmokratia* from foreign assault, his daughter Kallirhoē's adventures rupture the insularity of this narrative frame: married to the first stranger upon whom she literally stumbles, abducted by pirates, and hounded by would-be lovers, Kallirhoē's protracted peregrinations initially traverse the Greek world—from Syrakousai to Athēnai to Milētos—only to press inwards from Iōnia through the western satrapies of Īrān, from Karia and Kilikia south across the Transeuphrates, and down through Assyria to Babylōn, capital of Artaxerxēs, King of Kings. Acclaimed in the great Audience Hall the most stunning woman in all Europe and Asia, Kallirhoē subsequently returns full circle, this time by way of Syria and Kypros back to Syrakousai, her home. The charmed circle of democratic *Graecitas* thus opens for a moment onto the spectacle of the tributary Other, but closes itself off again as the heroine returns—her integrity intact—to Magna Graecia.[173] Accordingly the Happy End in which the entire citizen collective (*dēmos*) throngs the Syrakousan Assembly to weep for joy at Kallirhoē's restitution is one from which non-Hellenic readers of Greek, who filled the Eastern Empire, can only have been all too conscious that they stood excluded: thus, in the Egyptian Greek of the Fayyūm papyri, amongst which fragments of *Kallirhoē* figure, Ἕλλην ("Hellene") had become a term for "foreigner".[174]

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[169] For ssolid introduction to Chariton's novel, see Reardon 1982 and 2003; Starner 2011, 107-89.

[170] Cf. Nagy 1990, 17-115; Hall 2000.

[171] On "interpellation", see Althusser 1971.

[172] See Swain 1996, 101-31; Smith 2007.

[173] Cf. Konstan 1993.

Like the *Life of ʾAḥīqar*, then, *Kallirhoē* overlays one geography upon another: whereas the narrative's post-Herodotean world of the fifth century BCE sets Greece over against Īrān as two antithetical political spheres, where the Syrakousan *ekklēsia* and the *apadāna* at Babylōn constitute the metonyms of this polarity, the ambit that Kallirhoē's journey traces circumscribes the heartland of the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary state as it had expanded under Roman rule of the first century CE, its capital now famously translated westward to "Lavinian shores".[175] In part the Herodotean mondial divide functions as a trope for the politics of Rome—in particular the Romans' protracted wars against Parθava;[176] concomitantly, however, it represents the historical antecedents of this controversy. Or to put it more precisely: Kallirhoē's passage (*poreiā*) between West and East prefigures, for readers of the early centuries CE, the circulation of persons and commodities—in Kharitōn's romance Kallirhoē is both—within the borders of the politico-economic collective that Rome, subsuming Hērodotos' predicative fissure, would ideally embrace within its bounds.[177] For Kharitōn, however, empire has ceased to constitute a space of "peaceful unity which joins all [peoples] to itself and to each other," but appears rather as an inexhaustible source of radical displacement and paradoxical conjuncture, where only by exception does the "orphan pearl" pass smoothly from hand to hand: "One township escorted [Kallirhoē] to the next, one satrap gave [her] into the care of his neighbor, for beauty (τὸ κάλλος) carried all subjects away" [5.1.8]. Kharitōn, however, harbors no illusions about what he sees as the "sullen spectacle" (*drāma skuthrōpon* [4.3.2]) of tributary Empire[178]—so the next sentence adds: "It was on the expectation that this woman would wield great authority that each hastened to offer her alien hospitalities." Unexpectedly, then, though hardly by chance, Egypt erupts into violence in the final installment of the novel:

> Events now took a different turn (ταχέως μετέβαλεν ἡ Τυχη, καινοτέρων εὑροῦσα πραγμάτων ὑπόθεσιν). A report came to the King of a major rebellion in Egypt: the Egyptians, he learned, had murdered the royal sa-

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[174] Liddell and Scott 1968, s.v. 4.

[175] Virgil, *Aeneid* I, 2-3.

[176] See Marks 1985; Edwell 2007.

[177] Cf. Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 37.201-204.

[178] On the tributary structure of the Roman province of Asia, see Millar 1993, 49-51.

> trap and invested a king from among the locals. He had marched out from Memphis and passed through Pēlusion and was already overwhelming Syria and Phoinikia, to the point where their cities were offering no more resistance; it was as though a torrent or a fire had suddenly assailed them [6.8.1-2].

Mindful of Thermopylai,[179] Greek mercenaries make common cause with Egypt against Persian domination,[180] though despite stunning victories at Tyros and Arados—Kharitōn alludes here to Alexander's famous siege of 332 BCE,[181] a standard topos in the *Alexander Romance*—their combined numbers, as with the Spartiate Three Hundred, ultimately prove insufficient in the face of the Medes' overwhelming forces: when the vanquished Phara^{c}oh chooses death over captivity, Artaxerxēs' troops immediately move in to crush the provincial insurrection and efficiently reestablish politico-economic order.

Remarkably—particularly in contrast to Josephus' roughly contemporary *Ioudaïkou polemos*[182]—the punitive sanctions that Artaxerxēs imposes suggest no notable duress; as Shakespeare's Cymbeline puts it in a parallel position, "Pardon's the word to all" [V, v, 422]: so far as possible, Egyptians, Phoinikians, and Kypriots resettle where they will, while Kallirhoē cordially enjoins the Persian queen to correspond with her across the now pacific Mediterranean demesne. Alone among the Roman provinces, however, Egypt stands conspicuously absent from the harmony that tunes the novel's close.[183] Rather, "cut off from the whole" (ἀπήλλακται τοῦ ὅλου), her political dissatisfactions remain unnamed as well as unaddressed—an oversight which, in this case, realistically reflects Egypt's abiding history of resistance to all political subordination within the Levantine-Mediterranean world system, from Amyrtaeus' mutiny against Dārayavauš II in 411 BCE,[184] through the "Bucolic Revolt" that mobilized the Delta under Antoninus in 139 CE,[185] to the pagan riots rejecting Egypt's incorporation into Christendom following the Edict of Milan in 313 CE.[186] The closure of the Greek story, then, stands in marked contrast to the irresolution of the Egyptian subplot, whose imperial subjects Kharitōn represents as disaffected, recalcitrant, and—like the blocking figures of New Comedy—excluded from the societal renewal with which the drama closes.[187] Correlatively, Kharitōn takes nothing of generic import from the non-Hellenic peoples which the novel represents; rather, *Kallirhoē* draws on a repertoire of classical Greek types—comedy, tragedy, history, epistelography, rhetoric, and so forth—which, however dialogically disposed, serve principally to reinforce the novel's overall emphasis on Greek identity and culture.[188] This generic constraint finds its stylistic correlate in the homogeneity of Kharitōn's Atticizing diction which, as Bakhtin perspicaciously observed, "bears absolutely no indications of historical time, no identifying traces of its era,"[189] such that the novel not only appears detached from any historical communal setting, but also allows Greek readers from multiple sites within the Empire, and from a range of disparate decennia,[190] to find themselves interpellated as a dispersed collective by the novel.[191] Purity of style in Kharitōn thus constitutes a synecdoche of the cultural closure that *Kallirhoē* thematizes in its plot, a linguistic ascesis achieved as part and parcel of the novel's allegory of "depenetration."[192] Once again, however, this comes as a dialectical negation of the linguistic farrago that typifies a network such as the *Alexander Romance*, which variously juxtaposes Egyptian, Greek, Latin, Semitic, Īrānian, Turkic, Mongol, Armenian, Keltic, Slavic, and Germanic lexemes,[193] in a way that is itself mimetic of the multiethnic empire that Alexander seeks to build. "After sufficient time had passed," the α-recension of the Greek Romance explains, "one of the *ekplōratoroi*—this is what the Romans call them, among the Greeks, however, they are called *kataskopoi*—presented himself to Nektanebō."[194] However much *Kallirhoē* may attempt to close off the linguistic diversity of the Roman Empire, as if it were still possible to live in a world that was wholly Greek, works such as *ʾAḥīqar*, the *Alexander Romance*, or the *Life of Aisōpos* have always stood to demystify what Jacques Derrida has called "the monolingualism of the other".[195]

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[179] See Herodotus, Book 7.

[180] For the long-standing collaboration between Greek soldiers and Egyptian militrary insterests, see Trundle 2004.

[181] For a lucid summary, see O'Brien 1994, 76-82.

[182] See especially Books 6 and 7 on Titus' destruction of Jerusalem.

[183] Cf. Tilg 2010, 57.

[184] Bresciani 1985.

[185] McBing 1998; Rutherford 2000.

[186] See Ritner 1998.

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[187] Cf. Frye 1970.

[188] See Stephens 2008.

[189] Bakhtin 1975, 236ff.

[190] On "microidenties" within Imperial Greek culture, see Whitmarsh 2010.

[191] On Atticism, see Schmid 1964; Hernández Lara 1994; Wisse 2001.

[192] Cf. Altman and Taylor 1973.

[193] See, for example, Stoneman 2007a, 8 et passim; Barbour 1925-29, 2:107.

[194] Stoneman 2007a, 8.

[195] Derrida 1996.

On the one hand, then, Kharitōn's *Kallirhoē* unfolds within precisely the same geopolitical coordinates as the *Life of ʾAḥīqar* and the *Alexander Romance*: the multiethnic compass of the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary state. Moreover, truth and knowledge—*anagnōrisis*—transpire here by way of passage across this imperial domain and an encounter with the Īrānian Other—so before the last installment of narrative, Kharitōn stresses: "The goddess brought the truth to light and revealed the unknown to each other (ἡ θεὸς ἐφώτισε τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τοὺς ἀγνοουμένους ἔδειξεν ἀλλήλοις [8.1.4]). In contrast, however, to text networks such as *ʾAḥīqar*, the *Alexander Romance*, or *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, *Kallirhoē* overtly resists the notion that, as Saᶜdī of Shirāz (1184–1291 CE) famously phrased it, "mankind are like members of one body." All peoples may stand "mutually enchained", but the one point at which Greeks, Īrānians, Phoenikians, and Egyptians actually come together in *Kallirhoē*—at the sack of Tyros—is the moment of greatest violence in the novel. Accordingly, Kharitōn retreats into an ethnocentrism, though—set as it is against the backdrop of Levantine-Mediterranean cosmopolitanism—of a kind that differs fundamentally from the privilege staked out by such works as the Hebraic *ᶜEzĕraʾ-Nĕḥemĕyāh* or the Pārsīg *Wīdēwdāt*.[196] Kharitōn knows nothing of *ʾĒlleh šĕmoṯ*'s elected nationhood (*ᶜam sĕgullah*), and rather than transcendental totalization, it would be fairer to say that what he stresses is the particular over and against the universal. In this we see how *Kallirhoē* finds its place within the same nexus of ongoing geohistorical concerns as do the novels of the text networks: in both it is a question of how the part relates to the whole. Whereas text networks such as *ʾAḥīqar* or the *Alexander Romance* primarily incline towards "the one principal constituting the unity of many forms of life and enclosing the several members within the unity (ἐκ πάντων ἕν)," Kharitōn stresses—with equal merit, so far as Plotinos' vision goes—that "each several member must have its own task, … each its own moment, bringing its touch of sweet or bitter." By its very constitution, then, the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary state gave rise to both perspectives which, in their dialectical formation, not only require one another, but together realistically represent the historical tensions endemic to the political economy of the Levantine-Mediterranean world system.

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[196] See Stausberg 2002-04, passim.

V

Ancient narratives had a precise historical function that resists incorporation into any standardizing history of the novel. As the characteristic fiction of the Levantine-Mediterranean tributary state—stretching from the Achaemenid Empire through Rome to the Ottoman regime —the ancient novel aided readers in negotiating the political, economic, and ethnological complexities of tributary rule, in particular its peculiar dialectic between the persistence of local communities under government protection, and their concomitant negation by the apparatus of the state. Text networks on the scale of the *Alexander Romance* united readers across Eurasia, without homogenizing them, in a utopian vision of the world, while novels such as *Kallirhoē*, or the "historical romances"—these have mostly come down to us in fragments:[197] Lollianos' *Phoinikika* or Iamblikhos' *Babyloniaka*—foregrounded communal difference and competing claims for ethnic superiority within the arena of empire. Some narratives—*ʾEsṯēr* (ca. 400 BCE), for example—thematize the risks run by ethnic enclaves within the tributary state; others, such as Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Hēliodōros' *Aithiopika*, or Wolfram's *Parzifal* (ca. 1200 CE) explore conversion and marriage as tropes for crossing from one community to another, or for conjoining them. A minority of compositions—one thinks here of the *Chanson de Roland* (ca. 1150 CE)—remain unremittingly jingoistic.[198] In Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273 CE) we read not only that "cohesion is a mercy, and isolation a torment," but also that "the best place is where one is at home."[199] With the sublation of this dialectic, the ancient novel quickly became obsolete. In works such as Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* (ca. 1180 CE) one witnesses the birth of a different humanism, based on an individuality that is entirely self-constructed and independent of any community or state,[200] prefiguring, in this regard, both René Descartes (1596–1650 CE) and the "transcendental homelessness" that Georg Lukács saw as the principal defining feature of the modern novel.[201] Correlatively, works such as the *Kitāb nuzhat al-muštāq fī iḥtirāq al-āfāq* of Muḥammad al-Idrīsī (1099–1165 CE), or *Le divisament dou monde*, credited to Marco Polo (1254–1324 CE), provided the Mediterranean with a new mapping of the world which is no longer conceptualized as reticulatively communal, but rather as a series of discrete and largely independent loci, defined less by their tributary relationship to world power than as an accounting of potential markets waiting for the exploitation of motivated merchants.

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[197] Stephens and Winkler 1995.

[198] See Kinoshita 2006, 15-45.

[199] Rumi 1999, 68 and 99.

[200] Conrad 1966; Attar 2007.

[201] Lukács 1920.

> Balascian is a province where the people worship Maomet and have their own language. It is a great kingdom and the succession is hereditary. Their line is descended from Alexander and the daughter of king Darius, the Persian sire. The kings all still call themselves *Çulcarnein* in Saracen, their language (which is Alexander in French) out of their love for Alexander the Great. This province produces precious stones which they call *balasci*. The are very beautiful and of great value (*vaillance*), and come from the rocks of the mountains, from which they are excavated … There are other mountains where lapis lazuli is found, which is the best and finest in the world, [as well as] mountains in which there are great veins of silver.[202]

Not only has the life of Alexander been reduced here to a piece of local trivia ("they all call themselves *Çulcarnein*); Polo simultaneously displaces the Peripatetic drive for knowledge of the natural world onto a reckoning of stones and metals: *balasci*, lapis lazuli, silver—all there, ready and waiting to be mined, bartered, and committed to the trader's hand. With the rise of merchant capitalism, the ancient novel disappears. When European writers from Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616 CE) to Mme. de Lafayette (1634–93 CE) and Samuel Richardson (1689–1761 CE) returned to ancient fictional devices as a foundation for the modern novel, they stuck mostly to the Greek and Latin corpus, but they no longer understood what such narratives had meant.

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[202] Polo 1982, 360-61.

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King Midas' Ears on Alexander's Head:
In Search of the Afro-Asiatic Alexander Cycle

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Dedicated to Mrs. Golcan Hayati (Kabul)

For the purpose of visualising ancient history the historian Michael Wood literally travelled 'In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great'.

In his eponymous television documentary he gave a report of his 30,000 kilometres' long journey through the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and India. During these travels he everywhere met with local spokesmen, historians, storytellers, boatmen, pilgrims and officials who were prepared to tell him their 'indigenous' story about 'Iskandar' in front of the camera. This furnished the documentary with the status of a quest for mysterious traces left behind by the Macedonian invader and it aroused the impression that Wood imparted the public to exciting new discoveries. For the general public they were, of course, and to the 'Alexandrologer' they are a challenge to trace back to the well-known or more obscure branches of the Alexander tradition.

Actually, these 'recollections' of Alexander by individuals in remote places are not some scattered legends preserved by the local population from ancient times, but they are part of a wide-spread and varied Alexander tradition developed in the East from the 7th century onwards. This tradition was primarily based on Syriac religious and profane romances of Alexander and late Hellenistic popular philosophy. It spread in the wake of Islam – not entirely by coincidence – exactly in the regions Alexander had marched into a millennium before, and even beyond.

The scope, range and span of this 'Afro-Asiatic' cycle are largely comparable to the European medieval Alexander tradition, but as regards motifs and conception it takes a stand of its own. The corpus of European medieval

The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East, 61–79

texts has been studied, analysed and interpreted in many studies.[1] Its Afro-Asiatic counterpart, which is the focus of this paper, has only partly been explored, and in a scattered way. It has not yet been surveyed or classified as a coherent tradition, nor has it been studied as a historico-cultural landmark.[2]

The Afro-Asiatic Alexander cycle started with the translation of the Alexander Romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes into Syriac around 600 AD,[3] possibly through a Pahlavi intermediary.[4] Shortly afterwards, between 628 and 636, the apocalyptic Christian Syriac Alexander Legend and the Homily were composed. In the same period the Middle East became acquainted with the Qur'ān, spread by the young Muslim community of Arabia. These three seventh-century sources basically formed the pillars of the Afro-Asiatic tradition. A fourth source consists of an eighth-century Arabic Mirror for

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[1] George Cary's *The Medieval Alexander*, dating from the second half of the last century, is still an authoritative study in this field. Also see W.J. Aerts e.a., *Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages. Ten Studies on the Last Days of Alexander in Literary and Historical Writing*, eds. W.J. Aerts, E. Visser and J.M.M. Hermans, Nijmegen 1978.

[2] I will address this topic in a new multidisciplinary research-programme 'Beyond the European Myth. In Search of the Afro-Asiatic Alexander Cycle and the Transnational Migration of Ideas and Concepts of Identity', at VU University Amsterdam starting in 2012. Therefore, it is a fortunate occasion that Richard Stoneman organised the conference which dedicated attention to the oriental tradition: an excellent starting point for opening these perspectives.

[3] The original (anonymous) Greek Alexander Romance dates from the 3rd century AD. English translations by K. Dowden, 'Pseudo-Callisthenes. The Alexander Romance, translated by Ken Dowden', *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, ed. B.P. Reardon, Berkeley/LosAngeles/ London 1989, 650-735 and R. Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander Romance, translated with an introduction and notes*, (Pseudo-Callisthenes L with supplements from other recensions) London 1991. The Syriac Alexander Romance was edited, with commentary and translation by E.A. Wallis Budge: *The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac Version. Edited from Five Manuscripts of the Pseudo-Callisthenes, with an English Translation, Accompanied by a Historical Introduction on the Origins and the Various Oriental and European Versions of the Fabulous History of Alexander, with Notes, Glossary, Appendixes, Variant Readings, and Indexes*, Cambridge, 1889 (reprint Amsterdam 1976).

[4] This theory launched by Theodor Nöldeke has now been refuted by Claudia Ciancaglini on linguistic and cultural-historical grounds 'The Syriac Version of the Alexander Romance', *Le Muséon. Revue d'études orientales* 114/1-2, (2001), 121-140. In 1985 Nöldeke's hypothesis had already been questioned by R.N. Frye, Two Iranian Notes: 'The Pahlavi Alexander Romance' in: *Acta Iranica. Papers in Honour of Mary Boyce*, 10 (1985), pp. 185-189.
Also see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus. A Survey of the Arabic Alexander Tradition through Seven Centuries, from Pseudo-Callisthenes to Ṣūrī,* Mediaevalia Groningana New Series 13, Louvain (Peeters) 2010, p. 14 and pp. 79-80.

Princes – the *Rasā'il Arisṭāṭālīsa ilā 'l-Iskandar* – based on a late Hellenistic Epistolary Romance.[5]

Although these sources are still at hand and traceable, there is a lot of confusion concerning their origins and lines of transmission, not to say mystification.

Be this as it may, it is clear that in the course of the centuries after Islam a vast diffusion of the oriental Alexander tradition took place. It ramified into the languages and cultures, Christian and Muslim, of the two continents, Africa and Asia, culminating in high points like the Iskandar-chapters in Firdawsī's *Shahnameh* (1010), and the *Iskandarnameh* by the Persian poet Nezamī (13th c.). Other important representations of the Alexander cycle are the Ottoman-Turkish *Iskendernāme* by Ahmedī (14th c.), the anonymous Ethiopian Alexander Romances,[6] the Malay *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* (circa 1400) and the Arabic popular romance *Sīrat al-Iskandar*.[7]

It is remarkable to notice that Alexander became integrated in these cultures – as part of their own national/regional histories – in the role of an ancestor or hero, and the exponent of their own illustrious past.

The best known example is Alexander's incorporation into the Persian dynasty.[8] It is striking to see that the same phenomenon had earlier taken place in the formation of the original romance of Egyptian-Greek provenance. The anonymous Alexandrian composer of the Alexander Romance – known as Pseudo-Callisthenes – had made Alexander the natural son of the last pharaoh, Nectanebus II.

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[5] Edited by Miklós Mároth, *The Correspondence between Aristotle and Alexander the Great. An Anonymous Greek Novel in Letters in Arabic Translation*, edition with commentary, Piliscsaba (The Avicenna Institute of M-iddle Eastern Studies) 2006. Also see D.J. Latham, 'The Beginnings of Arabic Prose Literature: the Epistolary Genre', *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* I, Cambridge 1983, pp. 154-166, p. 155.

[6] E.A. Wallis Budge, *Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great. Ethiopic Histories of Alexander by the Pseudo-Callisthenes and other Writers*, translation, London 1896. G. Colin *Alexandre le Grand, héros chrétien en Éthiopie : histoire d'Alexandre (Zêna Êskender)* / trad. française [de l'éthiopien] par Gérard Colin, Louvain 2007.

[7] The *Sīrat al-Iskandar* ('Life of Alexander') is a romance of Alexander in the genre of Arabic popular epics, probably dating from the 13th-14th century. See Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, p. 275.

[8] Alexander (Sekandar) is the son of the Persian King Darius (Dārā), and the maternal grandson of Philip of Macedon (Filqus). With regard to the Persian descent variant, see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus,* pp. 19.

Less well-known is the fact that the fame of the Malay *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* caused several royal families in the Indian archipelago to claim their descent from Alexander.[9]

The Afro-Asiatic Alexander tradition as a whole contains world-histories, epics, romances, religious literature, exegeses, lives of the prophets, collections of wise sayings and proverbs, elegies and pseudepigraphic works on stratagems and warfare.

Some works have been the subject of literary criticism and received scholarly attention, but the corpus as a whole has never been examined systematically as part of a common cultural tradition.

As a result of my research into the Arabic Alexander tradition in the past years, I have surveyed and classified this part of the oriental tradition, which for a considerable part is still only available in manuscripts.[10]

Here, I will consider the oriental cycle from the perspective of the Arabic tradition as my starting point, according to my classification in five branches[11] to which many elements and representatives of the oriental cycle can be traced back.

As we consider the Arabic Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition it is preserved in world histories and texts which can be described as romances. Also parts of it appear in *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* (Tales of the Prophets), in particular in Thaʿlabī's *'Arā'is al-Majālis*,[12] and even in popular romances.

As regards the latter, I discovered in various manuscripts of the popular romance, *Sīrat al-Iskandar*, an Arabic version of the *Epistola*, the Letter from Alexander to Aristotle on India,[13] and the *Last Days of Alexander*[14] translated from Syriac. Also versions of the story of the Amazons and the Elevating Letter by Aristotle, based on the Syriac Pseudo-Callisthenes, can be found in scattered manuscripts of the *Sīrat al-Iskandar*.[15] Recently, I also discovered a transmission of Alexander's incognito visit to Darius – hitherto not known to exist in Arabic – in the Cambridge ms. containing a complete copy of the *Sīrat al-Iskandar*.[16]

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[9] J.J. Ras, 'The Iskandar elements in the Sedharah Melaju and the Hikajat Bandjar', *Bibliotheca Indonesica* 1 (1968), The Hague. Wieringa, E., 'Literatur als Machtmittel. Der Alexanderroman am Hofe Pakubuwanas II. im Jahre 1729', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 150/1, 2000 177-206.

[10] See *Alexander Magnus Arabicus. A Survey of the Alexander Tradition through Seven Centuries, from Pseudo-Callisthenes to Ṣūrī,* Mediaevalia Groningana New Series 13, Louvain (Peeters) 2010.

[11] The Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition, Alexander and Wisdom Literature, the Dhū l-Qarnayn tradition, the popular epic tradition *Sīrat al-Iskandar* and Alexander *stratègos*.

[12] Thaʿlabī († 1036), *Arā'is al-Majālis fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* (The highlights of enlightening sessons on the Tales of the Prophets) , see A. Abel, *Le Roman d'Alexandre, légendaire médiéval*, Brussels 1955, 73-82. Translations by William Brinner, 2002 and Heribert Busse 2006 (German).

[13] I edited the text with introduction and English translation: see Doufikar-Aerts, 'A letter in Bits and Pieces: The *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* Arabica. A First Edition with Translation Based on Four 16th-18th Century Manuscripts', *Writings and Writing from another World and another Era in honour of J.J. Witkam*, edd. R. Kerr and T. Milo, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 91-115 and '"Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem" Arabica' *La dif-*

The *Sīrat al-Iskandar* is a popular romance of Alexander, attributed to Ibrāhīm ibn Mufarrij al-Ṣūrī, who made Alexander the protagonist in an Arabian epic, quite remote from the Alexander romance proper, but rooted in it. The genre is comparable with the Persian *Dārāb Nāmeh* by Tarsusi and Arabic *siyar*, like *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*, *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* and many others.

Pseudo-Callisthenes also found his way to North-Africa and al-Andalus, in the so-called *Hadīth Dhī 'l-Qarnayn* – also known as *Leyenda de Alejandro*[17] – and several versions of the *Qiṣṣat Dhī 'l-Qarnayn* by Abū ʿAbd al-Malik (al-Malshūnī), in Arabic and al-Jamiado.[18] All of these texts only partially represent Pseudo-Callisthenes. They all incorporated motifs from other sources and in this respect the North-African tradition does not differ much from eastern traditions like the one preserved in the *Nihāya* by the historian Pseudo-Aṣmaʿī.[19] This history underlies the Alexander-episode in the *Akh-*

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fusione dell'eredità classica nell'età tardo-antica e medievale, monde orientale III, Alessandria 2000, 35-51.

[14] See Doufikar-Aerts, 'The Last Days of Alexander' in a popular Romance of Alexander, *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*, edd. S. Panayotakis, M. Zimmerman, W. Keulen, Leiden/Boston 2003, 23-35 and '"Les derniers jours d'Alexandre" dans un roman populaire arabe: un miroir du roman syriaque du Pseudo-Callisthène', *Alexandre le Grand dans les littératures occidentales et proche-orientales. Actes du Colloque de Paris 27-29 novembre 1997, Université Paris X-Nanterre*, ed. L. Harf-Lancer/ C. Kappler / F. Suard, Paris 1999, 61-75.

[15] I published a translation of the Elevating Letter in 'Dionysus, Enoch and Zakhraf: Deity, Prophet and King of the Jinn. Metamorphoses of the *Golden Letter'*, in: Medioevo Romanzo e Orientale Temi e Motivi Epico-Cavallereschi fra Oriente e Occidente, edd. G. Lalomia and A. Pioletti, Catania (Rubbettino) 2010, Editore, pp. 115-128, p. 124.

[16] Ms. Cambridge, Arab. Ms. Qq. 4, 202r.-203r.

[17] *Hadīth Dhī l-Qarnayn* was edited by E. Garcia Gomez, *Un texto occidental de la Leyenda de Alejandro*, ed. with Spanish transl., Madrid, 1929.

[18] The text probably dates from the 9th century. An edition of one of the versions of this Arabic text was made by David Zuwiyya, *Islamic Legends Concerning Alexander the Great*, Binghamton 2001. The al-Jamiado text was edited by A.R. Nykl, 'El Rrekontamiento del Rrey Ališand^{e}re', *Revue Hispanique* 76 (1929). 409-611.

[19] *Kitāb Siyar al-Mulūk al-musammā bi-Nihāyat al-Arab fī Akhbār al-Furs wa 'l-'Arab* ('Book of Biographies of the Kings, called; *The Ultimate Aim*, on the History of the Per-

bār aṭ-Ṭiwāl ('Long histories') by Dinawarī († 895), a historian of Persian descent who wrote in Arabic. When we compare these traditions there is not really a ground to classify the above mentioned texts exclusively as the Western Arabic tradition – as Garcia Gomez, the editor of the *Leyenda de Alejandro*, – did.

The most important witness of the text of Pseudo-Callisthenes' Romance in Arabic is the *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar* ('Life of King Alexander'), an Arabic version based on the Syriac Alexander Romance and the forerunner of the Ethiopic Alexander Romance. The text was considered lost, but I recovered four manuscripts containing this romance.[20]

I classified it as the Quzmān tradition after the name of the copyist of the first discovered manuscript, Yūsuf ibn ʿAṭiya, alias Quzmān.[21] With the emergence of this text many questions connected to transmission and mutual relationship are likely to be solved in future investigations. I want to point to one case.[22]

This text contains a detail which agrees exclusively with an element in the *Shahnameh* that can be found nowhere else. Both texts have specific remarks about Alexander's horse in relation to his conception and birth. In the *Shahnameh* it is stated that Alexander's horse was born with him on the same day.[23]

In the Arabic Romance we find what seems to be the background of this aside remark. Here it is said that Nectanebus, after having seduced the Macedonian queen – Alexander's mother – took a bath in the pond near the temple. Then, a mare came, drank from the pond's water and immediately became with foal. Augurs who had to explain the event involving the bird

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sians and Arabs'). Grignaschi dates it to c. 850. Grignaschi, 'La «Nihāyatu-l-'arab fī akhbāri-l-Furs wa-l-ʿArab»' *Bulletin d'études orientales* 22 (1969), 15-67, p.15.

[20] For the fourth ms., a Cairo ms. I am obliged to Adel Sidurus, who kindly brought this text to my attention.

[21] I have edited the four manuscripts and currently I am translating the text into English to be published together.

[22] For the Quzmān tradition, see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, Louvain 2010, 58-73.

[23] *Shahnameh. The Persian Book of Kings, Abolqasem Ferdowsi*, transl. by Dick Davis, 2006, p. 455: "The same night that Sekandar was born, a cream-colored mare in the royal stables, a huge warlike horse, gave birth to a gray foal with a lion-like chest and short pasterns. Filqus (Philip) took this as a good omen, raising his hands to the heavens in gratitude. At dawn the next day he had both the newborn child and the mare and her foal brought to him and passed his hands over the foal's eyes and chest, because he was exactly the same age as Sekandar."

that dropped eggs on Philip's head and in his lap, foretold to Philip that the mare that was to be born in his stables would protect his son Alexander.[24] Also important for the course of transmission of the Arabic Pseudo-Callisthenes is the Alexander story by ʿUmāra ibn Zayd, *Qiṣṣat al-Iskandar* ('The Story of Alexander'). This may be the oldest preserved text representing parts of Pseudo-Callisthenes in Arabic. ʿUmāra probably died around 815 CE.[25]

The Arabic Pseudo-Callisthenes is closely linked to its Syriac predecessor, which can easily be perceived, in particular in parts of the Alexander Romance which were transmitted for the first time in Syriac and which are not extant in earlier redactions of the Romance: the extension to the Letter from Alexander to Aristotle. The Arabic translation of this Letter[26] is clearly based on the Syriac text and parts of it became popular in all kinds of texts. One of the *mirabilia* which became a widespread topic in Arabic literature is the story of the dragon of the mountain, the so-called *tinnin*, which was cunningly slain by Alexander. The Arabic reads as follows:

> The people of that place said to me: "Oh King, no one can ascend this mountain." And I asked them: "And why is that?" They said: "There is a figure like a dragon who possesses the mountain and prevents that people set foot in there." And I asked them: "Where is its resting place?" They said: "At the riverbank." I said: "Does it appear unto you in another guise than in the shape of a dragon?" They said: "No." Then I said: "Do you have any benefit from it or gain any profit? On what grounds do you consider it a mighty creature, could you approach it?" They said:

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[24] "Meanwhile, after he had satisfied his desire for her, the priest of the deities, Baqṭānīs (Nectanebus) had gone to a water basin near the temple of the idols to take a bath. Then, one of the king's mares came to the very basin to drink from it, and the mare became with foal straightaway. This happened at the same moment that Fīlibus' wife, the queen, had become pregnant." – My translation.

" 'O king, you will live a long life, because the one egg from which the huge dragon came out means that a son will be born to the king who is a giant like the serpent, and who will rule the earth and defeat the kings, and nobody will be able to stand in his way. The other egg points to the fact that a horse will be born in your estate that will belong to this blessed child; when he mounts her she will safe him from every misfortune and she will help him to combat his enemies. Take care of her, o king, because the boy and the mare will have a great power together'." – My translation.

[25] The text is considered in this volume by Zuwiyya. Also see my chapters on this author and his work in Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, 1.6.1 and 1.6.1a, pp. 35-43.

[26] See above, note 13.

"We cannot come near it, because it swallows elephants and other animals." And I said: "How do you know this, since you cannot come close to it?" They replied: "From a distance we can see it devour a great many animals. And as concerns its benefit for us, it keeps off enemies from our country and restrains them and discourages anyone with malicious intentions towards us." And I said: "Does it guard your entire country or in particular the mountain?" They replied: "The mountain and especially its vicinity." I said: "Do you safeguard yourselves against it?" They said: "We provide it daily with the offering of two fattened oxen, which we station for it at the foot of the mountain. When it gets up to them he swallows them and then returns to its place." I said: "How do you approach it?" They said: "For this task we have selected a special group of our countrymen who have no other duty than to bring the two oxen daily in the early morning, before the said monster leaves its location and to station the prey at the foot of the mountain." From what they told me, I understood at that moment that it was just one of the inimical beasts, who had become accustomed to their usage to feed it in the morning. Then I rode with a group of horsemen and took up a position at a distance on the top of a hill from where we could see it. And the dragon came forth as it was accustomed to do, until it reached the oxen and I saw its amazing appearance and its gigantic stature. When it opened its mouth an enormous puff of smoke came out. As soon as it noticed the two oxen, it hastily devoured them both and returned to the place it had come from. I ordered that the next day two small calves be brought to it, instead of the oxen, which was meant to make it very hungry. Then, he came out as usual and swallowed the calves, but since its appetite was not satisfied, it stayed as if it was looking for something else, because of its severe hunger. After an hour it went away and crossed that river in order to find something, but it did not succeed. Then it headed for the horsemen, in our direction. I ordered the men to scream and yell in his face. When he heard the clamour and yelling before its eyes, it turned away from us to return to its place. The third day, I ordered two oxen to be slaughtered, their hides to stripped off and stuffed with lime, arsenic and sulphur and these stuffed skins put at the habitual place. The dragon came out precisely at the customary time and it devoured the two hides with all that was in it in a hurry. Within an hour it threw itself to the ground, uprooting many trees with its tail. At that moment I told them to throw rocks and pieces of iron and copper heated by fire and arrows in

> order that it be turned over into the river; then its flanks split open, its skin was cleaved and it died.[27]

The story was already known to ʿUmāra ibn Zayd and Pseudo-Asmaʿī and it occurs in most of the texts belonging to the Arabic Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition, but it also spread to the genre of *'ajā'ib* texts (*mirabilia*).[28] Subsequently the motif became part of the *Shahnameh*, elaborated by Firdawsī in his poetic verses on Sekandar.[29]

As I mentioned above, all the accounts on Alexander give a mixture of elements from Pseudo-Callisthenes and other sources. These other themes are mostly the motifs that belong to what I named the 'Dhū 'l-Qarnayn tradition'.[30] This tradition includes the Gog and Magog complex, the Journey through Darkness in search of the Water of Life, also connected to the saint, al-Khidhr/Hızır, and separate motifs, like the River of Sand and the Cities at the end of the inhabited world, Jābalqā and Jābarṣā. These motifs can be found in most of the stories of the so-called *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* (Tales of the Prophets), which spread all over the Islamic world. They express the religious character which became an archetypical part of Alexander's image by the fact that he was associated with Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, the Two-horned, mentioned in the Qur'ān.[31] This feature developed strongly in the regions and languages of Asia, especially in the writings and narratives of the edifying and popular genres. In Persian and many Turkic languages collections of Prophet Stories belong to the repertoires of preachers and storytellers.

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[27] Doufikar-Aerts, 'A letter in Bits and Pieces: The *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* Arabica. A First Edition with Translation Based on Four 16th-18th Century Manuscripts', *Writings and Writing from another World and another Era in honour of J.J. Witkam*, edd. R. Kerr and T. Milo, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 91-115, p. 128-130.

[28] See Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, 84 note 277. The motif seems to recall, according to Nöldeke, the story of Daniel's slaying a dragon with balls of bitumen, dough, and hair, the Jerusalem Talmud, Ned. 3:2: the snake of King Sapor was killed through use of camel hides stuffed with straw and charcoal. See Nöldeke, Beiträge, 1890, p. 22. Also see *Encyclopaedia Iranica* "Aždahā".

[29] Firdawsī uses the word *aždahā* (dragon). See *Le Livre des Rois par Abou'lkasim Firdousi, trad. par M. Jules Mohl*, tome V, Paris 1866, pp. 202-203. Also see Daniel Ogden's 'Sekandar, Dragon-Slayer', in this volume, pp. 111-128.

[30] See Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, chapter 3, pp. 135-193.

[31] Qur'ān 18:83-100. The Two-horned builds the Wall against Gog and Magog. See Doufikar-Aerts, 'Dogfaces, Snake-tongues, and the Wall against Gog and Magog', *Gog and Magog. The Clans of Chaos in World Literature*, eds. A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, F.C.W. Doufikar-Aerts and S. McGlinn, Amsterdam/West Lafayette, 2007, pp. 37-52 (2nd ed. *Embodiments of Evil: Gog and Magog: Interdisciplinary Studies of the "Other" in Literature & Internet Texts*, forthcoming Leiden 2011).

Both Iskender and Hızır[32] have become characters in local legends and marvels, but they also became companions in several romances, the *Sīrat al-Iskandar* as well as in Tarsūsī's *Dārabnāme* and Ahmedī's *Iskandarnāme*.

In North-Eastern Anatolia the name Iskender is sometimes changed into a contamination of Iskender and Zülkarnain, resulting in 'Zülkender'.[33]

There is a phrase used by children, when they want to keep a secret between them: 'Zülkenderin boynuzu var', which means: Zülkender has horns. The reply is: 'Boynuzu var', 'Yes, he has!' The story behind this is also a contamination or rather a transposition of tales. The Anatolians tell the myth of King Midas with Donkey's Ears on his head as the story of King Iskender with the horns. It is told that he used to hide the horns from public gaze by a turban. His barber, however, knows this secret and he has a hard time to keep it to himself. One day he goes to a pit and confides the secret to the cavity. However, the reeds growing there pick up the words and henceforth when a flute was cut from the reed it produces the sounds 'Zülkenderin boynuzu var'.

The following Dārī variant of this story, as preserved by an aged lady from Kabul, is quite elaborate and still narrated on a regular basis among Afghan families.

> Long ago there lived a mighty king in a luxurious great city. Every time when the king needed a haircut he would invite a new barber. When the barber had finished his job, he was richly rewarded by the king with gold and presents. However, when a day had passed, the king would send his soldiers after the barber in order to kill the man. In this way it went on for years until no more living barbers could be found in the city, except for one. When the king ordered the last barber to come to the palace, the man was warned by his fellow citizens that no barber ever had survived after serving the king. Nevertheless, the barber could not refuse the king's order, so he went to the palace. After he had been brought to the king all the servants were sent away and he stayed behind alone with the king. The king took off his crown[34] and the barber started to cut the king's hair. Then, he perceived that the king had horns on his head, but he did not react to it. When he had finished the job the king generously

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[32] See Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr: Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam*, Stuttgart (Steiner) 2000.

[33] I owe this information to Dr. Fikret Turan, lecturer at Manchester University, who mentioned it to me in a private communication.

[34] The word *tāj* in Dārī means 'crown' and 'comb' and, apparently, also 'turban'.

> rewarded him with gold and presents. Then the barber said to the king: 'Please, let me live. What I have seen, will stay a secret between us forever and moreover, I will leave the city never to return. If I do not keep my promise you may punish me and my family.' The king gave in and the next morning the barber gave his presents and gold to his family and left without further explanation. After a long journey through the country he came to a forest. Ever since he had left his home, he never had experienced a proper night's sleep, because the secret pressed heavily on his soul and because of that he had fallen ill. Wandering through the forest he came to a clear pool of water. On the shores grew wonderfully shaped reeds. There, he rested for a while and he fell asleep. In the middle of the night he woke up and bent over the water in order to drink some water. Then, he could not resist whispering over the water: '*Pāchā shākh dāra*', the king has horns! In the morning he found himself recovered and he resumed his journey. After a while a musician passed through the forest and came to the pool. Amazed as he was by the good quality of the cane growing at the waterside, he cut off a whole bunch of it. Then he produced a set of magnificent flutes, which he sold in the city. As a miracle, when the flutes were blown, one could hear the flute singing three words: '*Pāchā shākh dāra*'.[35]

In different Turkic languages we see as much divergence in the development of genres as in Arabic. Next to Ahmedī's epic poem, a politically inspired work on spiritual values, a kind of *Bildungsroman* composed in courtly circles,[36] we find the religiously motivated *Qiṣaṣ-i Rabghūzī* (14th century), with a mixture of *tafsīr*, commentary on the Qur'ān, and motifs from the Dhū 'l-Qarnayn tradition, like the story of the inflating bird. In this text the bird uniquely presents itself as Satan; in other texts, Christian as well as Muslim, he has an opposite function: the guard of superior morals. The story of the inflating bird, a swallow-like bird in most texts, is a widespread Islamized version of the encounter with two birds with human faces in the Aristotle letter. Alexander meets the bird in a castle on mount Qāf in the Land of Darkness. The bird begins to question Dhū ’l-Qarnayn, who answers the first question positively, after which the bird inflates itself, by degrees, until it fills the entire space of a castle. The last questions are answered negatively and the bird returns to its original size in three stages and lets Dhū ’l-Qarnayn pass. The six questions that are nearly always the same, relate to points of Islamic belief.[37] One, for instance, is: ‘Are false testimonies often given on earth?’ In *The Life of King Alexander* (Quzmān), some of the questions are different and it is intriguing that Islamic religious laws are mentioned in this (Christianized) text: ‘Do people think it is forbidden to drink wine and eat pork?’ Dhū ’l-Qarnayn’s answer is, ‘No, but they soon will’.[38]

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[35] This Afghan version of the story, told by Mrs. Golcan Hayati, came to my knowledge through the kind cooperation of her grandson, my student at the Seminar für Orientkunde in Mainz, Jamshed Dezham. I also thank my colleague, M. Rohschumann, for providing me with information on Afghanistan. Transcription of the Dārī phrase according to the Dari-English Dictionary edited by the Center for Afghan Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha, s.d., under the supervision of Mohammed N. Neghat.

[36] See C.G. Sawyer, 'Revising Alexander: Structure and Evolution. Ahmedī's ottoman Iskendernāme (c. 1400)', *Edebiyāt* 13/2 (2003), pp.225-243, p. 232. Ahmedī served under the Ottoman ruler Sulaymān Shāh and sultan Beyazīd I, especially favoured by his son Sulaymān Čelebi to whom he dedicated the final version of his *Iskandername*.

In other parts of the tradition, for example in the ʿAjamī Turkic Alexander stories,[39] another trait has been developed in particular, i.e. the character of Alexander in search of *mirabilia*; these stories recall the explorative travels of al-Iskandar Dhū ’l-Qarnayn in the popular epic *Sīrat al-Iskandar*. Reminiscent are the story of the Crystal Dome (story 6 in the ʿAjami Turkic collection) and Alexander’s visit to the Qubbat al-Fulād (Dome of Steel) and the construction of mechanical guards, preventing people to enter a building, pass or bridge.[40]

These correspondences between traits and motifs give the impression that they are somehow related or that they may have been derived from common sources, which were elaborated differently in both traditions, sometimes contaminating motifs and details.

Further south our search brings us to the tradition developed in South-east Asia. The *Sīrat al-Iskandar*, the Arabic popular epic, was translated from Arabic into Malay, before 1400. This work, entitled *Hikayat Iskandar Zul-*

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[37] Originally there are six questions, since the bird increases or decreases in size by a third. ʿUmāra, Abū ʿAbd al-Malik and Quzmān have all six questions; Thaʿlabī and the *Nihāya* only have four and in the ms. OR 11.724 and the *Leyenda* there are five. See Doufikar-Aerts , *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, p.175-176.

[38] *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar* in the Quzmān ms. 89r–89v. In the Ethiopic Romance (275), the question is no longer clear and the passage seems to have been (purposely?) adapted: ‘Are men allowed to drink wine, or is it forbidden to eat? And he replied, Nay, but He will come quickly.’

[39] Edited and translated by H. Boeschoten, *Alexander Stories in ʿAjami Turkic*, Wiesbaden 2009.

[40] See Boeschoten, *opus cit.* 68 pp. and Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, pp.223-224 and 218. Also see Boeschoten’s contribution in this volume.

karnain, had an enormous influence on the development of literary and narrative genres in the Archipelago. It left traces in many other works of the *hikayat* (romance) genre and the history of Iskandar became a completely integrated part of Malay chronicles and royal dynasties. The most remarkable thing is that the Arabic form of the epic apparently appealed to, and complied, entire and unchanged, with the cultural preference of the communities in the South-east Asian region. It is remarkable that some modern text critics consider the *Hikayat Iskandar* as a work of Malay literary creation, without taking into account the preceding stages of the epic.[41]

Further to the north-east the Alexander cycle reached the Turfan region, where it has been transmitted in the Mongolian romance of Sulqarnai, possibly from Uigur Turkish.[42] Although the scarce fragments remaining from this text – probably dating from the 14th century – are heavily damaged, it still revealed to the editors some characteristics and motifs which are familiar enough to be recognized as elements from the Alexander cycle.[43]

These are Sulqarnai's ascent to Mount Sumur, his descent to the bottom of the Sea, his journey to the Land of Darkness and his return to Miṣr (Egypt), where he is buried.

Since we cannot dwell on too many details here, it must suffice to remark that the Mongolian transmission developed mythical features, in particular. The bird speaking to Sulqarnai named Garudi – a substitute for the inflating bird, mentioned above, – has the features of the Garuda bird of Hindu and Buddhist mythology, the very bird that guards Mount Sumeru. This mountain seems to represent Mount Qāf, which occurs in the other stories. Another mythical element is the Water of Life poured out by Sulqarnai. Sulqarnai indeed finds the Fountain of the Water of Life, but he is dissuaded to drink from it; he might regret it, later, when he finds himself alone on earth, having become immortal by drinking the water. The spilled Water of Life then drips on the cypress tree which stays forever green, from that moment.

It is salient that the fragments of the Mongolian romance also reflect motifs from the Dhū 'l-Qarnayn tradition which are familiar also from the *Leyenda de Alejandro* and the *Qiṣṣat Dhī 'l-Qarnayn* by Abū ʿAbd al-Malik, although these traditions developed in the regions most distant from one another. The funeral rituals in the Mongolian text, for which Sulqarnai leaves a testament, indicate that he is equated with a Mongol Khan.

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[41] Soeratno, S.C., *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain. Analisis resepsi*, introduction and analysis, Jakarta, 1991. Perhaps this is due to the absence of an edition in Arabic.

[42] Sulqarnai derives from Dhū l-Qarnayn.

[43] N. Poppe, 'Eine mongolische Fassung der Alexandersage', *ZDMG* 57, 105-129 and F.W. Cleaves, 'An Early Mongolian Version of he Alexander Romance', *HJAS* 22, 1-99.

Within this survey of the dissemination of the Alexander tradition in Africa and Asia, attention must also be paid to the effects of the second branch, Alexander in Wisdom literature and a fifth category of texts which I referred to as: Alexander 'stratègos'. The latter one presents Alexander as the recipient and even author of letters and scientific works on warfare and techniques, as is the case of the *Kitāb al-Ḥiyal wa'l-Ḥurūb wa Fatḥ al-Madā'in wa Ḥifẓ al-Durub* ('Book on Stratagems, Warfare, Conquest of Cities and Defence of Mountain Passes'). It is preserved, amongst others, in two Leiden manuscripts (OR 92 and 499).

In some cases Alexander is associated with Hermetica, in astromagical works.[44] As I wrote in the lemma for the new, third, edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, these texts about Alexander in the role of the architect of military sciences and technical devices have as yet not been a subject of study. The aftermath of this material for the study of the tradition in the East may be of interest, as we recall the predilection of the ʿAjami Turkic stories and the *Sīrat al-Iskandar* for mechanical devices.

The after-effects of Alexander in Wisdom literature are another important aspect. The influence of the earlier mentioned Epistolary Romance has made itself felt in the relation between Aristotle and Alexander, which is strongly cultivated in Arabic writings of different genres and in the fact that Alexander is associated with the ancient philosophers, in compilations of wise sayings and maxims.

This branch of wisdom texts also formed the background for the creation of the masterpiece by the Persian poet Nezamī, who modelled Iskandar after the ideal of a perfect ruler, growing and developing in wisdom and religious ethics. Moreover, it appears to be influenced by a genuine philosophical work, the translation of Plato's *Republic*. In general Alexander owes his reputation as a wise ruler and philosopher-king, widespread in the Islamic world, to Wisdom literature.

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[44] For instance with the enigmatic *Kitāb al-Ist(am)ākhas* (or *al-Ustūṭās* and other variations). This was supposedly composed by Aristotle for Alexander, before his campaign in the East in the fourth year of his reign, on the basis of a work by Hermes Trismegistus. (See Sezgin, *GAS*, VII, 57). Moreover, there are numerous mss. containing treatises on alchemy, astrology, zoology and the like, the majority of which have not appeared in print (see Sezgin, *GAS*, III, IV, V, VII).

As opposed to other branches of the tradition the immense and rich Persian tradition has had relatively more attention from scholars in the past. The Persian tradition covers a vast region and a long period of time and several genres. Apart from the above mentioned epic poems, the scope of this tradition ranges, on the one side, from the work of the Indian poet Amir Khosrau Dehlawī (1253-1325 CE), *Ā'īna-ye Eskandarī*[45] to Tarsusi's popular epic, *Dārāb Nāmeh*[46] (12th century), on the other. Both texts are of a completely different character; whereas Amir's elaborated verses and innovative structure picture a royal portrait of Alexander, skipping the descent episodes, Tarsusi's prose epic is a folk narrative, in which the characters are more down to earth. Although Alexander lives through many adventures, he is not much of a hero in this narrative and in this respect Tarsusi's *Dārāb Nāmeh* has common traits with the *Sīrat al-Iskandar*.[47] M. Gaillard has proposed that the lack of heroic features in the former can possibly be explained by the fact that the 'genuine Iranian' Burān Dokht was meant to figure as the real heroine in the story, which aims at the glorification of Iran. Alexander's role is only functional as far as he is presented as a messenger of the true religion, which neutralises his bad reputation as the usurper of Iran. The romance shows a combination of two traditions.[48]

Al-Iskandar in the *Sīrat al-Iskandar* cannot really be qualified as an antihero, but his conduct seems to demonstrate such compliance that it almost lacks startling valiant initiatives. This cannot be credited, as in the case of the *Dārāb Nāmeh*, to the intent of making Alexander a secondary character next to the heroine Burān Dokht. Besides, there is no reason to adjust his reputation as a wicked invader and violator of Persian national pride, for an Arab audience. On these grounds there probably are more factors to be considered which could explain the correspondence of Alexander's traits in the two romances.[49]

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[45] *Ā'īna-ye Eskandarī* was completed by 699/1299-1300 (ed. D. Mirsaidov, Moscow, 1977), as part of Amir Khosrau's *Khamsa*. Its contents is different on several points, for example, Alexander is not presented as the son of Dārā, nor is there mention of Alexander's defeat of Dārā and his marriage to Rushanak. However, it includes Alexander's visit of China, the building of the wall against Gog and Magog, and an encounter with philosophers, fire-worshippers. It also describes a contest between Chinese and Greek artists.

[46] The story is dated to the 12th century. Alexander is the half-brother of Dārāb, son of Dārab the Elder and Nāhid, the Macedonian princess. He attacks the Persian King, but Dārāb's daughter, Būrān Dokht, raises an army to oppose Alexander. A series of conflicts takes place between the princess and Alexander, but it ends in a marriage between the two. The character Būrān Dokht is considered a popular representation of the Iranian deity Anāhitā (=Venus), see Hanaway, 1982. The story contains many common elements of the Alexander romance tradition, but also elements from folklore. The real hero of the story seems to be Būrān Dokht, rather than Alexander. See below, note 47 and 48.

[47] The translator of the *Dārāb Nāmeh* into French, Marina Gaillard and I have discussed the amazing agreement of these epics with regard to its hero's lack of heroism.

[48] M. Gaillard, 'Hero or anti-hero: the Alexander figure in the *Dārāb-Nāma* of Ṭarsūsī, *Oriente Moderno*, n.s. 89/2 (2009), 319-313, p. 327.

To conclude, I have substantiated that the oriental Alexander cycle is part of an essentially coherent, but – in the course of time and distance – much differentiated tradition. Its origins lie in antiquity, eventually. However, the heritage of antiquity obtained its specific character only after and through the spread of Islam. Therefore, mystification of its roots, as was suggested in Wood's documentary, is charming folklore, but we should rather consider this cycle with an open eye for acculturation and originality.

As an example there is the story transmitted by a spokesman of the Kalash.

> The residents of the isolated Rompur valley in the Pakistan Hindu Kush Mountains consider themselves the descendants of Alexander's troops. Storytellers of this non-Muslim tribe – the Kalash – relate their orally preserved history to visitors, recalling that before the period of Islam "Sikandar e Aazem, the Two-horned, who is called Alexander the Great in Europe, came to India. (..) When he returned to Greece, some of his men wanted to stay. Their leader was a general, named Shalakash. (..) They took local women as their wives and we, the Kalash, the Kafirs [heathens] of Hindu Kush, are the descendents of their children."[50]

Apart from the tenability of the assertions of the Kalash it can be observed that the terminology and the historical outlines point to a mixture of post-Islamic and 'western' interpretations of ancient history!

The 'local' name, Sikandar e Aazem, is Persian/Urdu (?), based on Arabic (*a'ẓam* means 'the greatest' or 'the Great'). The Two-horned is the Islamic epithet of Alexander. The general's name, Shalakash, looks as a corruption of Seleukos, Alexander's general who became his successor in the Eastern provinces. This general did not stay behind in the mountains, but he founded the dynasty of the Seleucids in 323 BC and he ruled his dominion from Mesopotamia and Iran. He certainly did not stay behind in the Hindu

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[49] See Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, 258-259 and 263.

[50] Michael Wood, *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great*, (1997), 7-8.

Kush Mountains. The name, Shalakash, seems to be an interpolation into the Kalash story from a late date, possibly from the contacts with British administrative officers in the Victorian period or even later.

These accounts are not important for their claimed authenticity, but for the fact that they contain precious information about cultural transfer in the region.

Their importance lies in the fact that they underscore the urgency to start investigations into the Afro-Asiatic cycle before invaluable documents, records and local traditions vanish or cease to exist.

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The *Alexander Romance*
and the Pattern of Hero-Legend

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It is usual and right to see the *Alexander Romance* as a group of texts that have still to be studied primarily in relation to one another.[1] Once the original amalgam of material is in place – in particular the epistolary collections and the Alexander-history[2] – we tend to see the rest as a matter of slow accretion round its central core, with the material of each new recension seen largely as part of a subliterary evolution. I wish here to throw the net wider: to ask how readily the 'heroic' inventions of the *Romance* mirror those already implicit in mythical and legendary materials before Alexander, and in historical and rhetorical traditions on the king himself; and how far they are underlined, and sometimes undermined, by the nature of popular narrative.

The pleasures of Procrustes: a template for hero-legend?

The *Romance's* profile of Alexander does bear some relationship, and only some, to the literary legends of other such figures: Heracles, say, or Roland or Charlemagne. Since the mid-19th century there has been an industry devoted to reviewing the templates of 'historical' legend, to try to establish some sort of paradigm round which they might be fitted. A relatively recent survey of the field by Archer Taylor comments on a series of attempts, by von Hahn, Raglan, Rank, Joseph Campbell and Vladimir Propp to try to establish what a 'heroic' profile might look like.[3] In each case the method has been more or less the same. We take a generous sample of heroes, ranging as it might be from Romulus to Rustem, and we work out a series of motifs, very often but not invariably in a similar order. This enables us to see how far heroic figures of similar stature undergo the same kind of adventures. The closer the similarity, the easier it will be to ask ourselves: 'what is the essence of heroic narrative?' And how far does the *Romance* skew the portrait of Alexander to conform to it? Taylor is quick to expose the shortcomings of both the sample and the methods; in no case he mentions was Alexander himself included; and Taylor has played safe by acknowledging that any such study is still in the early stages.

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[1] I have based most of the discussion on the Greek recensions, especially *B* (*L*). Translations of Greek and Latin texts are my own.

[2] For the constituents, Merkelbach (1977)^2.

[3] Taylor (1964), 114-129.

Our hope might be that if we were to isolate both the heroic typology and the unhistorical adventures found in the *Romance* we should find some pre-existent template that has been grafted onto something like a biographical work on Alexander, and that we could then 'explain' the peculiar nature of the *Romance* in those terms, and use the explanation to account for the phenomenal success of this 'Alexander organism'. Such an enquiry will be useful if it sheds any light on why such an enterprise has proved so difficult in the past and is likely to continue to be so.

There are perhaps three points of most obvious convergence with heroic legend patterns:

(a) The hero has a supposititious birth and a struggle to ascertain his real father.
(b) After superhuman feats he eventually over-reaches himself in his degree of arrogance, often including aspiration to immortality, and is accordingly destined to be cast down.
(c) The hero is killed by treachery, and his burial is in some ways unusual.

These categories are broad enough to command general assent, but probably too broad to be useful: King Arthur and Theseus can be squeezed in as comfortably as Alexander himself. Martin West's *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* maps the territory differently again, under such rubrics as 'Mortality and Fame', 'King and Hero', and 'Arms and the Man'.[4] But once more Alexander all but totally slips through the net. He is just too late in arriving on the scene. If the Greek novel has been hailed as 'latter-day Epic for everyman', something has still been lost along the way. Alexander can still have his named horse, but no named weapons like Roland or King Arthur; poisoning does not match a heroic vulnerable spot: there can be no such thing as an 'Achilles stomach'! Or his beloved companion Hephaestion dies, but cannot be mourned like Patroclus or Enkidu. The attendance of a committee of aphorism–spouting sages at Alexander's bier is no substitute for sacrificial maidens. And so on: the world had changed, and the genius of the *Romance* was its capacity to adapt accordingly, but at a price: the loss of heroic consistence and dignity.

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[4] West (2007), 375-503.

A second line of approach would be to look at the *Alexander Romance* itself and note the parts that are clearly false or downright impossible, and see what they amount to, and whether they cohere well together. This will give us:

(a) The supposititious birth of Alexander from Olympias' sleeping with the impersonator Nectanebus;
(b) The voyage to the ocean floor and the celestial journey;
(c) The failure to find the waters of life, and the prophetic talking trees;
(d) The expedition to meet Candace, and other 'trickster-impersonator' situations.

Taken together these do offer a common factor at least of a sort: Alexander is provided initially with prospects that are superhuman, insofar as Nectanebus himself at least *pretends* to be divine. He then has a series of adventures that show him trying to stretch human experience beyond natural boundaries of human endeavour and mortality: when supernatural voices turn him back he comes face to face with his limits. In the 'waters of life' episode, the fact that his daughter and the cook attain immortality and he does not emphasises the 'near miss' aspect: he has come within a whisker of becoming a god. There is in the Candace episode, as in the 'waters of life', an additional aspect of humiliation: Alexander can fool the whole world, but not a sharp-witted woman who has done her homework; and again, in the 'waters of life', he has failed to obtain immortality while a mere cook has succeeded.

Heroic failure before Alexander: Near Eastern Analogues?

Perhaps the nearest among heroic narratives to the pattern hinted at in the *Romance* is that of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*,[5] also one of relatively few that are chronologically and geographically available to the compiler of the *Romance* or his sources. This was appreciated before the end of the 19th century, but there is room for some caution here. The resemblances should not be allowed to stand or fall simply on the case as it stood then,[6] when the study of

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[5] Texts usefully translated in George (1999).

[6] Meissner (1894).

Gilgamesh was in its infancy: a number of new texts have come to light in Sumerian, Akkadian, and a number of other ancient near eastern languages since. These include texts relating to the military prowess of Gilgamesh, in *Bilgamesh (sic) and Akka*; and in 'one-off' adventures such as *Gilgamesh and the Huluppu-Tree*, where the relationship with Inanna is very different from that in the Epic.[7] We also have Sumerian texts relating to the hero's no less heroic father Lugalbanda, to say nothing of Heracles-like figures such as the god Ninurta. A larger Gilgamesh tale might well have begun to look rather more like the *Alexander Romance* than the tablets of *Gilgamesh* proper might suggest.

But as of now we must still focus on *Gilgamesh* in relation to Alexander's failure to drink the waters of life (2.41). Richard Stoneman[8] has more than once compared the two and sees the differences to be as striking as the similarities:

- Alexander fails to obtain the waters of life, where Gilgamesh obtains then loses a plant of rejuvenation (*AR* 2.41; Tablets IX-XI).
- There is no serpent to obtain the waters instead in the *Romance*, where the serpent cheats Gilgamesh of the plant.
- Alexander's involvement with the waters of life is really by chance, where Gilgamesh had set out specifically to find the means of avoiding death.

The first two of these objections can be challenged directly: the waters of life and the plant of rejuvenation serve the same function in each story, and the variation may simply be culturally determined.[9] Similarly in the second case, I should be inclined to argue that the cook serves the same function as the serpent: in either case the great king fails to obtain what falls by chance to some far more lowly creature. The last objection is more cogent: but although Gilgamesh wants to avoid death, even here the search for the plant is almost an incidental afterthought, triggered by a last-minute remark of Utnapishtim's wife when Gilgamesh is already on the point of sailing for home: it is to ensure that he does not go home empty-handed, having come all this way! (Tablet XI.270ff.) And after all, Alexander's progress is determined at least in part by the outline of the real king's itinerary: as the *Romance*-redactors try to include too many episodes, some will become subordinated, marginalised, or otherwise adjusted to fit very different surroundings.

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[7] Editio Princeps by S.N. Kramer, Philadelphia 1942.

[8] Stoneman (1992), 98f.; (2008), 152f.

[9] A good parallel is offered by Western/Eastern Tristan-type stories: it does not matter whether the lovers are held together by the Love-potion (Western), or because a magic talisman has made the heroine's husband permanently impotent (Georgian, Persian). See Anderson (2004), 110.

The Sumero-Akkadian world has produced other analogues to the 'so near and yet so far' aspect of human mortality especially in relation to flight. The story of Etana,[10] in which the hero nurtures a wounded eagle who then takes him heavenwards in order for him to obtain 'the plant of birth', has been suggested as a basis for the story of Alexander's ascent; unfortunately the ending is lost so that the full extent of the parallelism is not easy to assess. But in effect it combines the motif of winged ascent with the quest for a life-giving plant, though this time a plant of fertility rather than immortality or eternal youth. But the story of Adapa too has a similar shape to Gilgamesh' quest. The hero here is able somehow to 'break the wing of the South-wind' and ascend to heaven, invited to eat the bread of immortality by Anu but somehow tricked or otherwise manipulated into missing his chance.[11] Richard Stoneman rejects these as parallels for Alexander's flying machine, in favour of the very good parallel of the boys flying on large birds in the Ahiquar-section of the *Aesop Romance*, where however there is still no clear indication of a basket,[12] and of course no aspiration whatever to immortality. But there need be no either/or here. All we need to accept is that myths and legends are already well established in the Ancient Near East to suggest exotic or even celestial journeys as a means towards satisfying impossible human aspirations, particularly longevity or immortality. It does seem worthwhile to remind ourselves that both the Aesop and Ahiqar episodes are set in Babylon and Assyria, and rely on challenges between kings of Egypt and these locations, though of course that does not rule out Egyptian origin for the basic tale of itself. Richard Stoneman[13] notes that the parody of heavenly flight in Lucian's *Icaromenippus* would supply a more accessible parallel than Etana. So indeed it does, but Lucian after all does come from Samosata on the Euphrates, and we should be asking awkward questions about the name Icarus itself (<Ahiquarus). If we want an inspiration from closest to home, we should go for the episode where Alexander hopes to take the Sogdian rock, and is told by the locals *in their own tongue* that he will need troops with wings. He takes the rock, and presents his troops as indeed having wings (Arrian 4.18.6; 19.3).[14] Here we are looking at the con-

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[10] Dalley (1989), 189-202.

[11] Dalley ibid. 182-188.

[12] Stoneman (1992), 107f.

[13] Stoneman (2008), 117.

[14] For a vulgate version, Curtius 7.11.5f., 24.

vergence of Greek historian, local oral saying, and the possibility of further fictional development.

What we can usefully say is that the Sumero-Babylonian heroes are old enough to aspire to immortality or unnaturally long life as such; Alexander's exotic searches even in the *Romance* are motivated by scientific curiosity, be it by diving bell or flying machine; but in both cases he is close to the ends of the earth and still checked by divine warning; and the necessity to explain why he misses immortality persists in the episode of the waters of life placed between the two: these motifs have simply been aligned more variably in earlier myth, whereas they (eventually) constitute three separate but contiguous episodes in the *Romance* itself (2.38-41 in *L*).

On the Egyptian side, apart from the relationship to Nectanebus,[15] Herodotus' account invests Sesonchosis with world-conqueror status, and the *Alexander Romance* accordingly sets him up as a model for Alexander himself; but the remaining incidents mentioned by Herodotus do not belong with hero-cycle material.[16] One of the two fragments of a *Sesonchosis-Romance*[17] suggests a love-story, but in so doing confirms his interest, like that of Ninus, for generating fiction. Jasnow also invokes the Inaros-texts, with their invasion of India, their Amazons, and battle with a griffon: again we look forward to further papyri; but there is the risk that some of the details of these tales may postdate the initial achievements of the real Alexander.[18]

Perhaps the best link across these no-man's lands is that of Bellerophon and his winged horse Pegasus, attended with success until he oversteps the mark, and securely rooted in Lycia in Asia Minor. Pegasus does not actually occur in Homer's version, nor is the nature of his transgression against the gods there specified: we have to wait for Pindar and Euripides for a picture of the hero's arrogance, attempting to reach Olympus and being either thrown from his mount or struck with a thunderbolt.[19] But the *Third Kalendar's Tale* in the *Arabian Nights* is testimony to the continuity of the theme in the Near East.[20] Richard Stoneman also notes that there is no known precedent for the diving bell episode further back than the *Talmud*:[21] but once more the ever-growing corpus of Sumerian texts can offer some kind of counterpart to the story, though not for the bell itself. The essence of the episode in the *Alexander-Romance* is that Alexander and his contraption are seized by a huge fish which takes him off course so that he realises the error of his arrogance (2.38). It is not too much of a stretch to compare the myth of 'Ninurta and the turtle': the god, buoyed up by his victory over the Asakku-demon so that he has mastered the mountain, now tries to seize the tablets of destiny from the lair of Enki, the underwater Apsu; Enki leads him into a trap where he is held in a pit in the Apsu by a gigantic turtle created by Enki for the purpose, and is not let go till he has been mocked and learned a bitter lesson.[22] And after all Gilgamesh too has to dive underwater and enter the Apsu himself in order to obtain his plant. That he uses stone weights and a knife to cut them rather than a diving bell as such does not alter the parallelism of function between the two techniques.

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[15] For the relationship to Demotic literature, Jasnow (1997).

[16] Herodotus 2.102-110 (as Sesostris).

[17] Winkler-Stephens (1995), 246-266.

[18] Jasnow (1997), 96.

[19] *Il.* 6.152-202; Pindar, *I.*7.44ff.; Euripides, *Bellerophontes*, *TGF*^{2}, frr. 285-315.

[20] *Third Kalendar's Tale*: Dawood (1973), 285: the hero who opens a forbidden door rides a horse through the air which kicks his eye out on landing back among one-eyed men, and he is driven off as a fugitive. On the wider relationship between *Gilgamesh* and the *Nights*, Dalley (1991), 1-17.

Fumbling into Fiction: the Alexander of dubious histories

Whatever the contribution of pre-existent legendary or mythical materials to the *Romance*, many of its more exotic motifs and fictional extravagances can be seen in the main-line historical tradition itself: the Alexander historians were guilty of crossing the line into truth-bending, bungling, and fiction on their own account. One thinks of his allegedly tossing Aristobulus' book into the river Hydaspes because of its unworthy flatteries (Lucian, *Historia Conscribenda* 12), and that was one of the two sources Arrian considered most reliable. Moreover the real Callisthenes to whose authorship the *Romance* is impossibly attributed earned criticism for his encomiastic approach to Alexander, and his rhetorical presentation.[23] We find him slipping into heroic mould (*FGrH* F14a), especially in relation to the visit to Siwah: the expedition's purpose is rivalry with his ancestors Perseus and Heracles, and he receives miraculous guidance from two ravens. Clitarchus, the likely *Urquelle* of the Alexander-history behind the *Romance*, comes off badly too, as lying but clever; and Onesicritus still worse, including the visit of the

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[21] Stoneman (2008), 112.

[22] 'Ninurta and the Turtle' in Kramer (1984), 231-237.

[23] *FGrH* 124 T20, cf. Pearson (1960) 22-49; Brunt (1983) Appendix 3.

Amazons heavily rationalised by Arrian (7.13),[24] to say nothing of the appetite for wonder-narrative and some of the details of the exotic correspondence.[25] Even Ptolemy and Aristobulus after all were disposed to see the marvellous in their accounts of Siwah (Arrian 3.3). And Alexander's wounds were well on the way to becoming legendary: amid relatively trivial slips about the site of the wound, or indeed the site of Gaugamela, there is the major matter of crediting Ptolemy with Alexander's rescue when he himself admits that he was elsewhere at the time.[26]

Nor indeed is the most reputable historiography exempt: we have already noticed even Arrian picking up the story that the natives taunted Alexander with the need for flying troops (*Anabasis* 4.18.6). And Arrian also describes Alexander's royal progress in Carmania (6.28), which he interprets as imitation of Dionysus' travels through Asia after his conquest of India, hence the artificially large chariot for himself and his friends listening to flute music and accompanied by troops wearing garlands. Curtius and Plutarch both cover the incident, whereas Ptolemy and Aristobulus had left it out. The contrast is however with the *proportion* of such material, thinly spread in Arrian and increasingly prominent across the sections of the *Romance.* And we must always allow for the fact that the real Alexander carried an awareness of heroic precedent wherever he went, like so many of his would-be imitators.[27]

Moreover there was the beginnings of an Alexander-cult immediately, as Plutarch reports in his *Eumenes* (13.5f.), where Eumenes himself claims that Alexander had appeared to him in a dream and had been shown a tent, where the king himself would be present at their councils and assist with undertakings in his name. And even the divine dimension of Alexander's birth is well covered in the extra-romantic tradition. For Plutarch (*Alex.* 2) Alexander is descended from Heracles through Karanos (the reputed 9th century founder of the dynasty; and on his mother's side from Aeacus through Neoptolemus. As to Olympias herself, she is reported to have dreamt the night before her marriage to Philip of having had her womb struck by lightning, starting a spreading fire; Philip dreams some time later of sealing Olympias' womb with a lion-engraved offspring; Aristander of Telmessus is credited with interpreting this as the pregnancy of a lion-like offspring. There is also just a hint of the Nectanebus story itself: Plutarch alludes to the sighting of a serpent beside the sleeping Olympias, with consequences for Philip's interest in his wife, whether he feared enchantment or preferred to cede her to a higher being (*Alex*. 2). Hence we find a good deal of the *Romance* material on the edge of the biographical tradition, leaving only the identity of the divine being in doubt. Plutarch notes Olympias' connexion with large hand-trained snakes in an Orphic-Dionysiac context. So too in Plutarch, as in the *Romance*, the theme of consulting oracles on the legitimacy of Alexander looms large. Philip is to lose the eye that spied on Ammon sleeping with Olympias (*Alex.* 3). As to confiding the secret of Alexander's conception, Olympias too does this: the *Romance* has only to substitute the impersonation of an impersonation (by Nectanebus in person) (though Plutarch does note a contrary tradition: Olympias' jibe 'Will Alexander never stop making Hera jealous of me?'). Or Alexander's paedagogus Lysimachus ingratiates himself by calling Philip Peleus, Alexander Achilles, himself Phoenix (*Alex*. 5).

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[24] Clitarchus *FGrH*137 T6; 13 Onesicritus: *FGrH* 134F1 9 (among other offenders); Brunt (1983) Appendix 21.

[25] Pearson (1960), 95f.

[26] Arrian 6.11.

[27] On Arrian and the *Romance*, see further McInerney (2007).

The enormities of the *Romance* itself are consistent with the abuse of historiography in later antiquity in general: Lucian's own list of incompetent historians of the Parthian War – real or imagined – exhibits a good many traits which recur in the *Romance*: here too we have the irrelevant and trivial digression, the geographical howlers, the extravagant ecphrases, implausible imbalance in casualty figures, and the rest (*ibid.* 14-32). To this muster-roll, for whatever reason, must be added a goodly proportion of the *SHA*, in particular with the implausible texture of portents, fictitious correspondence, and preoccupation with the irrelevant lives of pretenders.[28] But reality could be no less odd. There was a bizarre Dionysiac re-enaction described by Dio Cassius on the part of an unknown impersonator in the early third century AD through the Danubian provinces.[29]

'Don't let him fall over the edge!': the Alexander of the Declaimers

The Rhetorical traditions of the Hellenistic and subsequently Graeco-Roman world were also able to appropriate Alexander for themselves.[30] A repertoire which drew heavily on Greek history but did not hesitate to cross the line into dubious or quasi-fictitious subjects on Philip and the Greek States was bound to have a field day on Alexander himself. Any fictions and falsehoods that were generated by the Alexander historians could easily be developed into the fantasies of declaimers: ‘Alexander at the edge of the world’ is as natural an area of development as it was to be in the *Romance* itself. A number of such areas have not been incorporated in the *Romance* in their surviving form, but at least they suggest an explanation of why such material did find its way there. In the early Roman Empire in particular, in the peculiar cultural world of the Second Sophistic, the Alexander industry flourished not only in historiography culminating in Arrian’s *Anabasis*, but over the broad spectrum of rhetorical activity. The very real awareness that not even Trajan had been able to emulate the extent of Alexander’s eastern achievements spoke for itself.[31]

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[28] On falsehood in the *SHA*, Syme, (1971), among much.

[29] Dio 79.18.1ff. with Millar (1964), 214-218.

[30] For the Imperial Alexander, Spencer (2002).

Alexander-material accordingly flourishes in the rhetorical schools: one thinks of Senecan declamation, where the focus on Alexander tends to be on giving him advice as to whether to go beyond India or to stay within the limits of the known world. Hence quotation from the declaimer Moschus (*Suasoriae* 1.2):

> It is time for Alexander to call a halt where world and sun come to the end. – All that I knew, I conquered. Now I desire what I do not know; – What tribes have been so barbarous that they have not bowed down and worshipped Alexander? What mountains so wild that his victorious troops have not trodden their ridges? We have come to a halt beyond the trophies of Father Liber. – We are not trying to find a world, we are losing one. – Here is a measureless ocean, untried by human endeavour, that chains the whole world and guards all lands, a huge expanse undisturbed by oars, shore one moment seething as the waves rage, one moment deserted as they draw back. A foul darkness weighs down the waves; and somehow, what nature has removed from men’s sight is shrouded by everlasting night.

We are in the same darkness at the supposed edge of the world in the *Romance* (2.37f.). As for the other end of the earth, the nonsense of an Italian campaign is at least anticipated by Livy’s counterfactual treatment, (9.18.1-7), imagining how Alexander *would* have come to Italy more in the manner of Darius than of himself.[32] But Alexander takes until recension *G* before he reaches the Pillars of Heracles.

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[31] For Dio’s Alexander, Jones (1978), 117-121.

The king is unusual as a self-evidently heroic figure in being a *pepaideumenos* as well; there is a great leap from Achilles' tuition by Chiron to Alexander's by Aristotle, and his curiosity looms large in the rhetorical tradition, as in the last *Dialexis* of Maximus of Tyre (41.1):

> They say that the Macedonian Alexander, when he arrived at <Zeus>Ammon's shrine, and the god addressed him as his son, trusted the god because of what Homer says when he calls Zeus 'father of gods and men'. But when he received this oracle, he only saw fit to ask one question after that. It was not about how to put Darius to flight, or about the impending battle, or the calamities of Greece, or the confusion in Asia; instead, as if everything else was to his satisfaction, he asked the god about the Nile, where it rises before flowing down into Egypt. Evidently this was the only thing that stood between him and complete happiness, and learning it would have made him content!

Trapp ad loc. suspects this as an invention of Maximus, but Lucian's development might suggest that the detail was more widespread. It surfaces again in the Medieval Tradition, when Alexander himself is prevented from reaching the source when he allegedly sends a party up the Nile to find it.[33] Once more the sense that even Alexander has his limits: the Nile sources are yet another form of 'the ends of the earth', and there is an implied arrogance in seeking them out.

Most ambitious however in these rhetorical adventures is the satire of vain wishes in Lucian's *Navigium*: the dialogue, from the mid-second century AD, offers three vain wishes by three different educated men; the latter pair in effect present Alexander's earthly adventures assigned to Samippus, followed by a fantasy of flight, assigned to Timolaus, like that of the Alexander of the *Romance*, not this time by birds-and-basket but through a series of magic rings: this day-dream combines the aspirations to exploration and long life (*Navigium* 44):

> ...I shall not live for only the duration of a human lifespan, but for a full thousand years, renewing my youth and always casting off old age every

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[32] Spencer (2002), 42-45; cf. Lucian *D. Mort.* 25 (debate between Hannibal and Alexander in the Underworld).

[33] Cary (1956), 373f. (the *Manchester Epitome*).

> seventeen years or so, the way a snake sloughs its skin...And all the amazing sights among the Indians or beyond the North wind I shall see, flying there myself. And that winged creature the griffin or the Phoenix in India no-one has seen, I should see even that. And only I would know the sources of the Nile, and how much of the earth is not inhabited, and if people live with their heads downward in the southern half of the world; and the sweetest pleasure of all, on the very same day I should announce the name of the Olympic victor in Babylon, and after breakfast let's say in Syria, I'd dine in Italy. How amazing from up in the air and out of range to spy on armies in conflict, and if I saw fit, to back up the losers and send the victors to sleep and provide victory to the fugitives, turned from their flight. And all in all I should make the life of men my plaything: everything would be mine and everyone else would think me a god.

In effect what we have here is a learned version of the same material as we find in popular guise in the *Volksbuch*. Alexander is not mentioned by name except to be outdone, yet the details of Samippus' expedition, his individual heroism and being wounded on campaign, make the identity unmistakable enough,[34] though in the context of a day-dream he is allowed to kill the Persian king in single combat rather than encounter the historical circumstances of the death of Darius! Samippus wishes to magnify his achievement by starting out as a brigand, just the stigma Darius in the *Romance* applies to Alexander himself (1.36).

Alexander is also able to generate fictitious correspondence outside the *Romance*, as when we find that even the celebrated exchange of Alexander and Diogenes can appear as the subject of correspondence, in the spurious *Cynic Epistles* (*Ep.* 33 Malherbe) where Diogenes himself reports the incident. He is gluing pages of a book when Alexander blocks his light, and so he is not an uneducated Cynic:

> 'You really are invincible, sonny, since you are able to do what the gods do: for look – they say the moon disposes of the sun by getting in its way, and that's just what you have done by coming here and standing beside me'.
>
> Moreover even Diogenes can write to Olympias, and very learnedly, in his own right, as he too compares himself to the (suitably ragged)

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[34] So G. Husson (1970) ad loc.

> wandering heroes of the past, Telephus and Odysseus, of course in relation to his own *autarkeia* (*Ep.*34 Malherbe).

Still more elaborate is the dialogue between Alexander and Diogenes in Dio of Prusa's *Fourth Kingship Oration*, with a hint once more of the dubiety of Alexander's divinity: he arrives incognito to Diogenes in Corinth, and the latter asks if he is Alexander the bastard (4.18):

> Even your own mother, I hear, says this about you. Or is it not Olympias who claims that you aren't actually Philip's offspring, but fathered by a snake or Ammon or some other of the gods or demigods or wild animals?(4.19)

Naturally the cynic favours the formula that anyone is a son of Zeus who is educated in heavenly rather than earthly kingship, again patterned after Heracles.[35]

Perhaps the most useful 'heroic' Alexander-manifesto comes from the development in Plutarch's uncharacteristically extravagant *de Fortuna Alexandri*, expanding the familiar punch line 'if I were not Alexander I should be Diogenes' (*Mor.* 332Af.):

> If I were not intending to blend foreign with Greek, to march on every continent and civilise it, to discover the furthest bounds of land and sea, to push Macedonia forward to the Ocean, and to disseminate and lavish the benefits of Greek justice and peace over every people, I should not be content to relax and luxuriate in power and do nothing, but I should set my sights on Diogenes' frugality. But for now, forgive me, Diogenes, for I am imitating Heracles and emulating Persius, and following in the tracks of Dionysus, the divine patriarch and ancestor of my line (cf. 326B); and wish that Greeks should dance victorious once again in India and remind the savage mountain tribes of the Caucasus of Bacchic revels.

It is not hard to see the overlap with the *Romance* tradition in the exploration of the furthest bounds of the sea. And the Bacchic revels begin to hint at elaboration of Alexander's Dionysiac ambitions. Even Plutarch is straining towards the development of the tradition. We have useful development of this in turn in another direction in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, where

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[35] *Or*. 1.58-84. Cf. Jones (1978), 116-120.

Alexander the sober sage (!), anxious to discourage his troops from developing a taste for wine, sacrifices at the foot of Aornos and marches on, allegedly on the basis of local tradition (*VA* 2.9). Anyone can have a go, and Alexander belongs to everyone...

A good many of the themes of the *Romance*, then, mirror the rather more sophisticated flights of fancy of the learned rhetorical tradition. The *Romance* stops short of the ultimate fantasy, despite the emphasis on Alexander's mortality. We have to go for educated rhetoricising sources to hear Alexander's voice beyond the grave, as in Lucian's version of Diogenes and Alexander (*D. Mort.* 13-2f. Macleod):

> But tell me, to whom have you left all that great Empire?
> I don't know, Diogenes; for I didn't move fast enough to give instructions; all I did was give Perdiccas my ring when I died.
> But tell me, where was it the Macedonians buried you?
> I've been lying in Babylon for all of thirty days now, but my guardsman Ptolemy is promising that once he gets some peace from the troubles right now, he's going to take me off to Egypt and bury me there, and there's the prospect I'll become one of the Egyptian gods...

The Medieval tradition does eventually catch up, with the story of the philosophers round the tomb of Alexander.[36] But even there Diogenes is alive where Alexander is well and truly dead!

Anything goes: the Alexander of the Volksbuch

Heroic dimension and rhetorical tastes sit uneasily in the *Romance* beside the 'feel' of a sub-literary confection. The foremost feature of *Volksbuch* composition[37] is that the author/authors do not exercise the controls necessary in any normal work of literature: they act as usually anonymous compilers, and materials are juxtaposed in blocks which may appear more or less random and somehow do not quite fit. The campaign against Darius alone threads in and out of the Romance in an apparently random way, hence chronological chaos, mess and muddle. The abrupt absorption of the *Ahiqar* story into the

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[36] Cary (1956), 151f.(from Jewish-Oriental sources, which invade the *Disciplina Clericalis* and similar texts); Stoneman (2008), 193

[37] On the nature of *Volksbuch* composition, e.g. Hansen (1998), xi – xvii (as 'popular literature'); cf. Anderson in Schmeling (1997), 107-113.

Aesop-Romance illustrates the point, as does the juxtaposition in the *Secundus*-corpus of the story of Secundus' silence and a list of his answers to the emperor Hadrian's questions.

A further characteristic of a *Volksbuch* is the appetite for riddling material: the real encounter with the Brahmans offers a starting-point for an episode that naturally carries over into the *Romance*. But there are many others: typical is the exchange between Darius and Alexander over the gifts of symbolic objects (1.36ff.). The three objects sent by Darius, strap, ball and gold, represent to him the need for correction, a child's toy, and pay-off for the brigands; to Alexander a punishment for barbarians, an orb signifying world domination, and a tribute from the vanquished. Here the most obvious similarity is with the exchange between a much earlier Darius and the Scythians in Herodotus 4.131f., where objects sent by the Scythians are interpreted wishfully by the king, and realistically by his adviser Gobryas, exactly the context we find here. We are hardly to think of learned allusion to Herodotus, so much as the ritualised exchange of insults so common in primary Epic. Such *ainigmata* are also authentically attested for communication with illiterate peoples,[38] and so appropriate to the simpler cultural level of the *Volksbuch*. And it is instructive to note the same mannerism in an episode of the *Aesop-Romance* (78ff.), where Aesop's master expands an acronym on buried treasure to justify his possession of it, while his slave sees it as 'hands off!'. The expansion of acronyms occurs in the *Romance* itself (not with varied interpretation this time) for the foundation of Alexandria (1.32); and in the numerically coded oracle spelling out the name Sarapis (1.33). We are at least on the way to the pulp thrillers of the Da Vinci Code variety, with as little stylistic sophistication.

There is also an appetite for a certain kind of incident pattern: Alexander's night escapade, inspired by a dream of Ammon, combines heroic endurance with disguise as Ammon as seen in the dream; he then impersonates Alexander's messenger, with several hints that he could pass for Alexander himself, before helping himself to cups and pretending that this only reflects Alexander's generosity at his own feasts. He is recognised, but his pursuers come to grief, a mishap underlined by the collapse of a portrait of Xerxes, before Alexander escapes across a thawing frozen river losing only his horse (2.13-15). The episode at Kandake's court is similarly structured: this time Alexander rescues the daughter-in-law of Queen Kandake of Meroe from the Bebrycians(!) by changing places with Antigonus and acting his role in front of Kandake's son Kandaules. The false Antigonus then threatens to burn down the Bebrycians' town unless she is released, and that done Alexander is now brought by him to Kandake's own court. This time too Alexander is recognised, as she had had a portrait done of him in advance and the conqueror of the world is in her power, but he survives solely because the queen maintains in public the fiction that he is Antigonus (3.19-23). In both cases we are looking at the clever improvisations of the folk-hero, unusually and oddly combined with the use of a more 'civilised' device in the form of portraiture.

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[38] On which see S.West (1988), 207-211.

The result is that the heroic dimension of Alexander tends to be lost in an assemblage of often inconsequential material that reduces him to either a homunculus or even a non-person. If we compare the treatment of the siege of Tyre by Arrian and that of the *Romance* we have an opportunity to see what a *Volksbuch* will all too clearly miss. The historian with a sense of both Homer and history gives an extensive narrative (2.15-24) with room for an address to Alexander's troops, a glimpse of Alexander in the thick of the fighting, and some idea of the scale of a great siege-piece; and only one simple dream (Heracles invites Alexander to enter his city). The *Romance* (1.35) has a prophecy and two dreams, including the rather low-grade pun Sa-turos, and a threatening letter; although Alexander clearly has impersonating an envoy in mind, one of the dreams warns against it, so that some other agency saves his life, since the Tyrians crucify the messengers. But hardly a sense of destiny. Three local villages assist the opening of the gates, and everything is over in three days, instead of the real seven months. A proverb on the ills of Tyre and an explanation of the name Tripoli after the villages, and that is it. The redactor has no real capacity to develop an opportunity.

Perhaps most critical for the nature of a *Volksbuch* is the clearly limited educational awareness of the writer/redactor and the reader alike. The learned treatments of Alexander as evidenced for example by Onesicritus' focus on Alexander's relationship to Homer in a rather different way to the *Romance* (*FGrH* F 38): Alexander regards the *Iliad* as the *ephodion* of his military prowess, and had with him the 'Recension of the Casket' with Aristotle's corrections, which he kept with his dagger under his pillow. The *Romance* has Alexander belittling the size of the seven-layered Homeric shield and magnifying Homer's presentation, followed by a typically quotable put-down: Alexander would sooner be a Thersites in Homer than an Agamemnon in the work of a contemporary poet (1.42). Aristotelian annotation has gone, and we are left with crude point-scoring and cleverly quotable *chreia.*

Moreover with no real author or editor in charge the character and consistency of Alexander is the first casualty. He can be pointlessly murderous or cruel, as in the murder of Nectanebus himself or the killing of Lysias (1.14, 20), though it might be contended that this is little different from the real Alexander. But this does not cover his spite against the cook who obtains the waters of life when he does not (2.41). Alexander's drinking however does not figure in the way it does in mainline narrative history, and so cannot contribute to any rounded portrait of the king. In general he has the air of something between a compulsive trickster and a souvenir-hunting tourist. Although it is routine to evoke comparison with the Odysseus of the *Odyssey*, the one-dimensional, or even un-dimensional Alexander of the *Romance* underlines all too well the simplicity of the latter. The picaresque character of the king has been noticed, and that goes hand in hand with his inventiveness.[39] Once more it can be compared with the exploits of Aesop/Ahiqar in the *Aesop-Romance*; but once more it is a good deal less sustained than in the latter.

Conclusion: an Alexander for everyman

What, then, can be said about heroism in the Greek *Alexander Romance*? Most obviously, that the nature of a *Volksbuch* tends to render it incoherent and elusive. There is no overall level of control, as there is in Sumero-Babylonian and Homeric Epic alike. There is not even a consistent level of playful villainy that will produce a consistently picaresque hero. To some extent this reflects a mercurial historical figure whose ambitions could still outrun even the most phenomenal achievements; but still more does it emphasise the propensity to bolt on anything and everything without any real obligation to ensure a fit or an overall shape. It does not just resemble the *Aesop-Romance* in the matter of the flying machine, but rather in the ineptitude of abrupt and quirky changes of register throughout. The conspicuous omissions that would have appealed to a redactor (such as the celebrated encounter with Diogenes or the Gordian knot) are often as striking by their absence as what has come to be included.

We can come full circle back to heroic legend with a Medieval Hebrew text of the king's quest for the waters of life, the *Sefer Alexander Mokdon*:[40] Alexander leaned over and filled his cupped hands with water and was just about to drink when a solemn voice said:

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[39] Stoneman (2008), 110f.

[40] Ed. I. Levi 1896, adapted tr. in H. Schwarz, *Miriam's Tambourine*, (New York, 1988), 132.

> 'Wait! Before you drink of those waters, do you not want to know the consequences?' Then Alexander looked up and saw a radiant being standing before him, like the one at the gate of the Garden, and he knew it must be an angel. Alexander was filled with awe. The eyes of that angel cast an aura and when Alexander felt that light upon himself, he felt the presence of the angel all around him, and knew its sacred purpose. Alexander said simply, 'Yes, please tell me'. Then the angel Raziel – for that was who it was – said to Alexander: 'Know, then, that whoever drinks these waters will know eternal life, but he will never be able to leave this garden'. These words greatly startled Alexander, for had the angel not stopped him he would already have tasted of those waters and become a prisoner in that paradise.

Of course Alexander will have none of it. This reads like a variant of the celebrated choice of Achilles already known in the *Iliad*: the hero can have a long and consequently inglorious life in contrast to his current choice (*Iliad* 9.497-504). But once more in the manner of the *Volksbuch*, it seems to sidestep true tragedy by producing instead a fairy tale scenario characteristically relying on a condition. The Alexander of the *Romance* laments the absence of a Homer to sing his praises. But Achilles outdid him even after that complaint had been voiced. Alexander did not have a monopoly on the development of romantic embellishment: we find Achilles enjoying immortality with Helen of Troy in the White Island in the Black Sea, after an exploit defeating a naval expedition by the Amazons! In the account at the end of Philostratus' *Heroicus*, he had finally secured military glory *and* immortality after all.

We can make some inferences from the parallels to the *Romance* both in hero-tale tradition and in the learned rhetorical tradition about and around the figure of Alexander. The great popularity of the *Romance*, so unintelligible in relation to its literary and historical shortcomings, might be explained from the fact that this is one of those few texts which 'has everything': epic achievements, pseudo-history, and rhetorical extravagance are all there; and in addition any number of wonder-tales, the feel at times of a wisdom-book, a sense of the (ever expanding) exotic, and a 'so near and yet so far' in relation to immortality and the human condition. What tends to be diminished is any real sense of tragedy, as lacking here as at the end of the *Aesop Romance*: a cunning demonstration to Olympias about the 'banquet of joy' (3.34) open only to those who have never experienced sorrow has the naivety almost of hagiography:[41] it is as trivial as Aesop's back-to-the-wall stories in the last chapters of the *Aesop-Romance*.

Appendix: 'Alexander and the Holy Graal'?

One episode draws together the kind of questions I have set out to pose: the visit to the temple at Lysou (Nysou?) Limen in recension *B*, and its evident doublets in the same vicinity (3.28): Alexander and his men come across a temple evidently in the middle of Persia. It has Bacchic symbolism in depiction of revellers, but it also contains a strange figure whose face is obscured by wrappings. In the vicinity are two huge mixing-bowls. Alexander arranges to have a feast there, but volcanic rumblings drive him off:

> We came across a very high mountain; I went to it and saw fine houses laden with gold and silver. And I saw a large precinct wall of sapphire with 150 (108 *L*) steps leading up to a round temple with 100 sapphire columns forming a circle. Inside and out were figures carved in relief as though of demigods: bacchae, satyrs, women initiates playing the flute and dancing ecstatically. And the old man Maron was on a donkey. In the middle of the temple lay a couch with golden legs made up with cushions, on which there was a man dressed in silken cloth. I did not see what he looked like, as he was covered up, but I did see his strength and the heftiness of his body. And in the middle of the shrine there was hanging a one-hundred-pound golden chain and a golden wreath. Instead of fire, a precious stone provided light that illuminated that whole place. A bird-cage of gold was suspended from the ceiling, in which there was a bird the size of a dove and as though with human voice, it cried out to me in Greek saying, 'Alexander, from now on stop matching yourself with the gods: return to your own palace and do not rush head over heels into the ascent to the paths of heaven'. I wanted to take it and the chandelier down to send you, but I saw the man on the couch stirring, evidently to rise, and my friends said to me 'Don't, King – it is sacred'. Going into the precinct I saw there two mixing bowls of chased gold with a capacity of sixty firkins – we measured them out at the banquet. I gave orders for the whole camp to be there for a feast. There was a large, well-equipped building there and striking goblets to grace any level of ele-

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[41] One notes its place for example among the scoptic materials of Lucian's *Demonax* (25): the challenge to name three people who have never mourned.

> gance, carved from stone. As we and the troops were taking our places for the feast, suddenly there was a sort of violent thunder of countless flutes, cymbals, Pan-pipes, trumpets, drums and lyres. And there was smoke all over the mountain as though we had been hit by a storm of lightning bolts.

It is worth exploring a certain resemblance between this episode and medieval accounts of Holy Graal episodes as experienced by Arthurian knights in a variety of mostly continental romances from the 12th century onwards. The key consideration is the veiled figure.[42] In several Arthurian versions the Graal Castle is presided over by a King who is richly dressed or conspicuously wrapped. The grail may be a stone, a platter, a Eucharistic vessel, or some other form. In some cases the castle has gone by the next morning, leaving the quester alone and still puzzled,[43] and in one text, *Perlesvaus*, the floor is lifted to reveal a view of hellfire below. If we uphold a general resemblance, the Alexander-tradition has not understood the relationships in question: we are not told that the veiled figure, as a King of the Waste Land, is nourished by the content of the mixing-bowls, or that they represent some kind of Elixir of Life; but we are given to believe that Alexander is somehow not worthy to remain on the scene.

One could argue that such a veiled figure recalls someone like Asshurbanipal as described by Diodorus (2.23), and that this represents oriental reality as only dimly reflected in the Graal narratives with their occasionally oriental colouring; and that otherwise the episode grows out of the oft-repeated emulation of Dionysus, of whom Alexander seems here unworthy. If, on the other hand, much of the Graal materials is pre-Christian anyway and sits curiously on the edge of the classical world, the Graal materials may not be directly derived from the developing *Alexander-Romance*, as Gaster supposed, but may be an earlier ingredient of it.[44] But we should be left in no doubt that here once more the stereotype of the *Volksbuch* hero's naivety and failure is reinforced: is he a latter-day devotee of Dionysus or a Parsifal *avant la lettre*? As with so much in the *Alexander-Romance*, we are still left wondering, and must constantly await the accessibility of more and more texts to clarify our overall picture.

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[42] Cf. the presentation in Wolfram, (Loomis 1963, 200).

[43] Loomis ibid. 72. The resemblance was noted as long ago as M. Gaster (1891), 50-64.

[44] See further Anderson (2004), 146-149.

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Part 2

Perspectives

The Persians in Late Byzantine Alexander Romances: A Portrayal under Turkish Influences

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The texts I shall be considering in this paper are two Late Byzantine versions of the *Alexander Romance*. Though both are usually classified under the heading of vernacular literature, they are indeed of a very different kind: the first one, a poetic version, in a rather conservative language, to be found in a single manuscript, the *Marcianus graecus* 408, is for the most part a rewriting of the two oldest versions of the *Alexander Romance*, the so-called α and β recensions, and may have been composed at the end of the fourteenth century, if the date of 1388, which appears at the end of the text, points to the composition of the work, and not to the copy of the manuscript.[1] The second work, the so-called ζ recension, is a prose narrative, with a very complicated story:[2] it derives from a younger version of the *Alexander Romance*, the Christianized ε recension, composed in the eighth or ninth century; but we have lost the original form of the text, which may have been written at the beginning of the fourteenth century; during the same century, perhaps under the reign of Stephan Dusan; this now lost version was translated into Serbian, and possibly enlarged with borrowings from a Western version of the *Romance* (a specimen of the *Historia de preliis*); during the fifteenth century, somewhat before or after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, the text came back to Byzantium, in a Greek translation of a very vernacular kind. Though neither the Byzantine *Poem of King Alexander* nor the ζ recension can be dated with absolute confidence, there is one thing that we can be sure of and that links together these otherwise quite dissimilar texts: both were composed at a time when the Byzantine Empire was deadly endangered by the Turks. From the mid thirteenth century, the Ottomans became a more and more oppressive menace for the Byzantine state. Many of the letters written by Demetrius Cydones, a man of letter close to the emperor Manuel II, show what a strong feeling the Byzantines had of the danger their country was facing: Cydones often compares Byzantium attacked by the Turks to Jerusalem assaulted by Nebuchadnezzar.[3] The impending Turkish threat probably explains the appearance of rewritings of the *Alexander Romance* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: we can find in contemporary political speeches an increased exploitation of Alexander, conqueror of the Persian Empire, as an imperial paradigm.[4] The composition of two new versions of the *Alexander Romance* is part of the same "Alexander revival" and must be read as an expression of "nationalistic" consciousness. The question I would like to explore in the present paper is how far the historical context influenced the account which both works gave of Alexander's campaign against Darius, and whether the Late Byzantine redactors superimposed an image of the contemporary Turkish enemies on that of the old Persians.

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[1] See Gonzato 1963; Trumpf 1965; Matzukis 1987 and 2006. *Contra* Pfister 1960; Aerts 1978 and 1996.

[2] See Moennig 1992.

At first glance, the Byzantine *Poem of King Alexander* seems to offer rather disappointing material, for it is a conservative text, whose author follows quite faithfully his ancient sources, the α-β recensions. In the first versions of the *Alexander Romance*, Darius was already portrayed in a rather negative way, as a Barbarian and a braggart, and unsurprisingly the same image has found its way into the Byzantine poem, through the same sequence of episodes: still a child, Alexander humiliates Darius' ambassadors by refusing to pay tribute to the Persian empire; the series of letters he exchanges with the King of Kings illustrates the Barbarian's foolishness and boastfulness;[5] the Macedonians' victories over the Persians show the superiority of a small army of brave soldiers over a multitude of cowards…

Though we can find basically the same items in the *Poem of King Alexander* and in its ancient sources, a close comparison of the texts makes it clear that the anti-Persian bias is more pronounced in the late Byzantine rewriting, because the Byzantine redactor has developed and exaggerated anti-Persian remarks already present in his sources, and because he has combined in one and the same text elements to be found separately either in the α or in the β recension. Alexander's proclamation to the Macedonians after Philip's death offers a striking example of "nationalistic" amplification of the "war of liberation" motif: in the β recension, source of the passage, Alexander urged his subjects to campaign against Darius, so that Greeks may be freed from Persian servitude (I, 25); the Byzantine redactor has forced the contrast between Greece and Persia, and his hero insists that Greeks, who « are all excellent in fighting » (πρὸς μάχην ἄριστοι), must not be « wretchedly » enslaved to « Barbarians without force » (βαρβάροις ἀνισχύροις: v. 1133-1137). Then we find again the "war of liberation" motif in an episode borrowed from the α recension, the story of Alexander's contention with the Athenians, to whom the young king proudly declares he wants to destroy all Barbarians and make them subservient to Greeks for the sake of liberty (v. 2515, 2809-2810, 2863-2864). A third example of the same motif features in the episode relating the passing of the Euphrates, where the Byzantine redactor develops a remark present only in the α recension: as in α (A, II, 9), but in sharper words, Alexander declares, after destroying the bridge of the river to prevent any possibility of turning back, that he does not want to return to Greece before slaying all the Barbarians and looting all their cities (v. 3109-3111): only then will he come back as a «great conqueror» (μέγιστος νικηφόρος).

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[3] See for instance Ep. 39 (ed. Camelli 1930).

[4] See Trahoulia 1997, 40-50.

[5] Ottoman sultans are frequently reproached with the same shortcoming in contemporary historical sources. For Mehmed II, see Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, XXXVIII, 7 (ἀλαζόνεια); XLII, 5 (ὑψαύχην καὶ ἀλαζών); Ps.-Sphrantzes, *Majus Chronicon*, ed. Grecu 1966, 434 (κενοδοξία).

In Alexander's answer to Darius' first letter (v. 1808-1874), we can see how the Byzantine redactor expands the text of his sources in order to stress the Persian king's impiety. In the ancient versions of the *Romance*, Alexander's reproaches of Darius for usurping the names of gods occupied only a couple of lines;[6] in the Byzantine poem, we can read a downright diatribe against the Barbarian, who is accused of raising an arrogant voice, of running towards the heaven, of laying hands on the clouds, of harbouring hubristic thoughts.[7] The words chosen by Alexander clearly suggest assimilating the Persian king of the *Romance* to the bad kings of the Ancient Testament, for instance to the Babylonian king whose arrogance prophet Isaiah criticizes so harshly.[8] The redactor of the Byzantine poem repeatedly calls Darius a κακόφρων (« ill-minded »), in passages where his sources were devoid of any negative expressions (v. 1772, 1804). The Persian soldiers too are viewed in more negative terms than in the ancient versions: during the first great battle between Alexander and Darius (a fictional counterpart of the historical battle of Issos), they all die or run away (v. 2030-2039), and further on in the narrative, the redactor describes them as terrified by Alexander's stratagems (v. 3338, 3347). But, in spite of his constant propensity for blackening the Persians, the redactor of the Byzantine poem has kept unchanged the account of Darius' death and, like his ancient sources, he presents the Persian king, once betrayed by his subjects, as a pitiful victim, and unexpectedly declares that he was « a skilled and brave warrior » (v. 3860: δυνατὸς εἰς μάχην καὶ γενναῖος), as if his personal shortcomings were obliterated by the offense made to his function: in the agony episode, the narrator turns his indignation against the Persian king's murderers, as he will do at the end of the *Poem* against the murderers of Alexander himself.

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[6] See β, I, 38: αἱ γὰρ τῶν θεῶν ὀνομασίαι εἰς ἀνθρώπους χωροῦσαι μεγάλην δύναμιν αὐτοῖς παρέχουσιν ἢ φρόνησιν; πῶς γὰρ τῶν ἀθανάτων θεῶν ὀνόματα εἰς φθαρτὰ σώματα κατοικοῦσιν; ἰδοὺ δὴ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ κατεγνώσθης παρ᾽ ἡμῶν ὥς μηδὲν δυνάμενος παρ᾽ ἡμῖν, ἀλλ᾽ ὥς τὰς τῶν θεῶν ὀνομασίας συγχρώμενος καὶ τὰς ἐκείνων δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἑαυτῷ περιτιθῶν.

[7] *Marc. gr.* 408, v. 1822-1840: Σοῦ τὸ φθαρτὸν σωμάτιον τὸ φέρον κλήσεις τούτων | ὑψοῖ μεγάλαυχον φωνήν· εἰς τὸν αἰθέρα τρέχεις· | κρατεῖς τὰ νέφη ταῖς χερσίν· ὑπέρογκα φαντάζῃ, | γελῶν καὶ κατεμπαίζων με μετὰ πολλοῦ τοῦ θράσους. | Γράφεις μοι μείρακα λοιπόν, ἀντάρτην καὶ φονέα, | τοὺς σὺν ἐμοὶ πάντας ληστάς, ἀρχιληστὴν ἐμὲ δέ. | Κἂν ὥς ληστὴν φοβήθητι, κἂν ὥς φονέα φρίξον· | οὐκ εἶ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος αὐτός ; οὐκ εἶ βροτὸς ὥς πάντες ; | Τοῦ χρόνου βλέψον τὸν τροχόν, ἴδε φορὰν τῆς τύχης. | Τί τὰς σεπτὰς ἐνδέδυσαι θεῶν ὀνομασίας ; | Οὐ κατοικοῦσι μετὰ σοῦ· βρότειον σῶμα φέρεις. | Κακίστως γράφεις θάνατον σταυροῦ προσενεγκεῖν μοι, | ἐμοὺς δὲ φίλους ἰσχυρούς,

The presence in the narrative of an interpolated version of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem (v. 1604-1688), drawn from the chronicle of George the Monk, and ultimately going back to Flavius Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, introduces into our text the idea that Darius' defeat is a result of divine will. In the Jerusalem episode Alexander relates that, before he left for his campaign against Darius, he saw God in a dream promising him victory over the Persians (v. 1640-1650), and the Jewish priests confirm the veracity of Alexander's dream, by reading him Daniel's prophecies about the succession of the world empires: the prophet, they say, has announced the destruction of the Persian empire by the Macedonian (v. 1656-1658). It seemingly follows that the King of Kings' rule has been condemned by Heaven.

In the ζ recension, the "nationalistic" component is given a far greater prominence than in the Byzantine poem. If we admit that Alexander, when

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καλλίστους Μακεδόνας, | πάντας αὐτοὺς ἐν ὄρεσι φούρκῃ προσανυψῶσαι. | Ἀνοηταίνεις οὖν αὐτὸς καὶ μέγα κατεγνώσθης | ὥστε μηδὲν δυνάμενος ἐν ἔργοις χρηστὰ πρᾶξαι. | Ἐν λόγοις σου τοῖς κομπηροῖς φαντάζῃ μέγας εἶναι. | Τὰς ὑπερόγκους ἔασον φωνὰς καὶ μεγαλαύχους· | γεννήθητι πρὸς πόλεμον ἕτοιμος καὶ πρὸς μάχην. On the amplifying process at work in this passage, see Aerts 2010, 38-39.

[8] Cf. Is. 14, 13-14. Further examples in Jouanno 2007. Doukas similarly links together contemporary and Biblical history, while comparing Mehmed II the Conqueror with Nebuchadnezzar (*Historia Turco-Byzantina*, XXXVI, 1).

foretelling in the throes of death the submission of Macedonia to Persia (FE, 127, 5), is actually uttering an *ex eventu* prophecy about the fall of Thessaloniki to the Turks, the episode is to be considered as an inducement to read the whole work by the light of recent history.[9] To be sure, many of the innovations introduced by the Byzantine redactor into the story of Alexander work toward debasing the image of the Persians and reinforcing the anti-Turkish trend of the narrative. The first transformation to be noted is the role given to Darius in the "prehistory" of the *Romance*, I mean in the "novella" of Nectanebo: in the ζ recension, it is Darius who attacks Egypt and forces the pharaoh to flee to Macedonia (FE, 3, 1); he thus appears as a common enemy of Alexander and his (genuine) father, and from the outset of the story plays the part of an archetypal figure of hateful opponent. Second innovation: Darius' rule over Macedonia before Alexander's accession to the throne is depicted in terms that call to mind fourteenth-century Turkish domination over Byzantium: in the ζ recension Philip does not only pay tribute to the Persian empire, as he did in the ancient versions of the *Romance*, but he must lend military assistance to Darius, as fourteenth-century Byzantine emperors, vassals of the Ottoman empire, had to fight for the sultans:[10] when he goes to war at the beginning of the *Romance*, the redactor specifies that he obeys an order (ὁρισμός) of the Persian king and rejoins the Persian army (FE, 8, 3); and to come back to Macedonia, he has to get Darius' permission (συμπάθιον), in order to be freed from his military duties (FE, 12, 1). The addition of such details is important, for they serve to construct an image of Alexander as liberator of enslaved Macedonia.

Throughout the narrative, many criticisms are expressed against Darius in particular, and against the Persians in general: the former is depicted as a fool and a braggart; the latter are repeatedly accused of cowardice. After receiving the Persian king's first letter, Alexander speaks with much irony of the stupidity of his opponent who, he says, « thinks with his feet » (FE, 32). In one of his own letters to Darius, he affirms he is not afraid of the Persian soldiers, for they fight as « adorned women » (FE, 50, 7: ὥσπερ στολισμένες γυναῖκες); to his troops he declares that the Persian army is headless, for there is no king among the Persians; in the same discourse, he successively compares the Persian soldiers to sheep and women, and accuses them of fighting battles but under duress (FE, 55, 1-2 and 8). Even after Darius' death, the motif of Persian cowardice still appears in the narrative, in the mutiny episode, during the Indian campaign: the Macedonians, who planned to betray their king in order to be kept alive, are lectured by Alexander, and remorsefully reject the fault of the betrayal project upon the Persians who have been integrated into the Macedonian army: « The Persians are the authors of the rebellion: as fearful, cowardly neighbours of India, they wanted to frighten us. » (FE, 91, 4). The punishment Alexander chooses to inflict to the traitors clearly indicates the "nationalistic" trend of the ζ recension: for he imposes a humiliating treatment on the Persians, obliging them to wear « women's clothes » (γυναίκεια ῥοῦχα) and « women's headscarves » (γυναίκεια μανδήλια) — and in this penalty we find of course a clear and contemptuous allusion to the Turkish turban.

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[9] In the most recent adaptations of the ζ recension, the name of Thessalonike has been replaced by Constantinople; in the *Meteorôn Metamorphôseôs* 400 manuscript (M), which was copied in 1640, the redactor explicitly assimilates the Persians to the Turks who conquered Jerusalem, Constantinople and the whole of Macedonia.

[10] Cf. Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, XIII, 1 et 4.

The constant disapproval of the Persians is paired in the ζ recension with a constant praise of the Macedonians, whose bravery is repeatedly put to the fore. When Alexander pays a visit to Darius, under the guise of a messenger, he tells the Persian king that Greek and Macedonian soldiers are worth ruling the world, for « they are generous, very wise and extremely brave » (FE, 60, 10). While Darius is described as a despot, Alexander appears as a good, enlightened king, who makes his subjects happy, as long as they show obedience to him. One episode seems to have been especially reshaped in order to show Alexander's superiority over his Persian enemy — I mean the story of the Persian Abyssos (FE, 57): the redactor of the ζ recension must have borrowed the anecdote from the oldest versions of the *Romance*, the α-β recensions, for it did not feature in his main source, the ε recension. In its primary form, the episode relates how a Persian soldier (in α-β, he remains anonymous) dresses up as a Macedonian to be able to approach Alexander and kill him by surprise; he is found out by Alexander's companions, but gets the Macedonian king's pardon, and even his compliments, because of his heroic attitude (II, 9). In our text this rather brief anecdote has been much amplified: the redactor has forged additional dialogues and, most important, he has imagined a new, and rather unexpected outcome to the story: he says Abyssos, once freed by Alexander, comes back to Darius, in order to account for his mission (rather for the failing of his mission), and suddenly declares that, now he has given his due to the Persian king, he prefers to move to Alexander's side, for he owes his life to him. The author ascribes Abyssos's unexpected reversal to Alexander's generosity: the Macedonian is supposed to have proved a better king than Darius, and the episode thus serves to enhance the protagonist's praise; but it also serves to blacken the image of the

Persians: for the story of an exemplary subject of the Persian king suddenly transformed into a renegade reveals the Barbarians' fickleness and their poor devotion to duty.

Daniel's prophecies about the world empires are mentioned in the ζ recension, as they were in the Byzantine *Poem of King Alexander*, but with far greater emphasis. Alexander hears of the announcements of the prophet long before coming to Jerusalem, when he is visiting the city of Rome, and the Roman priests read him the prophecy foretelling the victory of the Macedonian goat over the Persian ram (FE, 44, 2). The same message is at the very core of the Jerusalem episode, which has been much amplified in the ζ recension, so that Daniel's words are thrice alluded to in one and the same passage: the prophet Jeremiah, whom the author of our text presents as contemporaneous with Alexander (he will become in the following chapters Alexander's divine protector), first tells the Jews that Daniel has appeared to him and announced that Alexander will free the Jewish people from the Persian domination (FE, 51, 6); Alexander then reveals he has seen Jeremiah in a dream foretelling that he will take possession of Persia with God's assistance (FE, 51, 7); and when the king actually meets Jeremiah, the prophet repeats once again Daniel's prophecy about the world empires (FE, 52, 6).

In the ζ recension, the war between Macedonians and Persians is thus undeniably transformed into a holy war: Alexander declares to the Jews it is improper for men adoring the true living God to be subjected to idolaters (FE, 51, 5), and on the eve of his first great battle against Darius he sees in a dream Jeremiah announcing to him that God will fight on his side against the Persians (FE, 55, 11-12). When he pays a visit to Darius under the guise of a messenger, he explains to the Persian king that he will be punished for his insolence by God's justice, whose eye incessantly observes right and wrong, who knows the hearts of men and, after having raised Darius to the supreme power, will now push him down so that Alexander becomes master of the whole world (FE, 60, 6-7). After Darius' death, once he has been proclaimed king of Persia, Alexander builds a tower, from the top of which he announces the omnipotence of God Sabaoth (FE, 70, 7): we have here a rewriting of an episode which in the ε recension occurred at an earlier stage of the narrative, during the stay in Egypt, in an anonymous city which was a mix of Alexandria and Memphis (ch. 24). The shift of the tower motif into a Persian context is probably to be ascribed to the "nationalistic" feelings of the redactor: in the ζ recension, it is the victory over the Persians (that is over the Turks) that forms the very heart of Alexander's expedition:[11] Overcome by

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[11] Cf. Moennig 1992, 117.

God's will, Darius is doomed to Hades, where every κακόβουλος (« ill-advised ») will be punished, as he confesses soon before dying (FE, 67, 6). As a matter of fact, Alexander will meet him in the caves of the gods, among the shadows of various kings guilty of impiety and arrogance (FE, 114).

A few words, before concluding, about the further developments of the ζ recension during the period of "Tourkokratia", when Greece had become subject of the Ottoman empire:[12] for, unlike the Byzantine *Poem of King Alexander*, which remained without posterity, the ζ recension has given rise to a great number of rewritings (it is the source of the well-known modern Greek *Phyllada*). The text of the Iviron manuscript 169 (J), written during the sixteenth or seventeenth century, shows that the process of "nationalistic" reinterpretation of Alexander's adventures was continued during what can be called the dark ages of Greece, as if to offer to the humiliated Greek audience an imaginary revenge over the Turkish oppressors.[13] A first example of this tendency appears in the episode of the war counsel following Alexander's accession to the throne: in the Iviron manuscript the hope is plainly expressed by one of Alexander's lieutenants that Darius' name will be destroyed by the Macedonians (§ 20). The episode of the Persian embassy has been reshaped so that it becomes an especially humiliating experience for the King of Kings (§ 22-24): Katarchouses, the Persian envoy Darius has sent to « rule over Macedonia », is rebuked by the Macedonian grandees, who say they do not need him, for they already have their own king; Alexander himself, instead of submitting to Darius' request, replies that Macedonia is in possession of a good king, so that Darius' ambitions are absolutely vain; Katarchouses, much impressed by Alexander's attitude, soon suspects Darius was wrong to send him to Macedonia, for Alexander is « worth ruling »; but when he comes back to Persia and tells the Persian king his feelings of admiration for Alexander, Darius reacts as a blind and aggressive tyrant, who does not want to let people speak of Philip's son as a worthy king, and he stubbornly sends a second envoy to Macedonia, with the same message as the first one (Darius calls for Alexander's submission, and asks him to come and fight under his command, as did his father Philip): this second envoy is rebuked as the former (§ 25): once again Alexander affirms Macedonia has a good king, good grandees, good and courageous soldiers. A sharp contrast is thus set up between Greeks and Persians, to the latters' greatest detriment.

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[12] About the hardships Greece had to endure under Ottoman rule, see Castellan 1991, 117.

[13] On this text, see Trumpf 1967, 11-12; Veloudis 1968, 25-29; Moennig 1987, 61-65.

This post-Byzantine rewriting of the *Alexander Romance* we can put on a par with the amplified version of Sphrantzes' *Chronicon*, the so-called *Majus Chronicon*, which was probably composed by Makarios Melissenos, the metropolitan of Monemvassia, in the sixteenth century, and is called by its translator, M. Philippides, « one of the most important Greek literary works » of the period:[14] the image of the sultans given in the *Majus Chronicon*, and especially that of Mehmed II the Conqueror, is a very negative one: Mehmed is portrayed as an impious tyrant, enemy of the true faith, and destroyer of the Christian people. Both Melissenos' revision of Sphrantzes' *Chronicon* and the updated version of the *Alexander Romance* copied in the Iviron manuscript can be considered as literary by-products of a same hostility to Turkish rule: the "Roumi" who modernized the text of the ζ recension has obviously projected his hatred of the Turkish occupying power upon the Persians of the *Romance.*[15]

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[14] Philippides 1980, 9.

[15] The same patriotic reinterpretation of the Alexander story is to be observed in Romania, during the second part of the sixteenth century, when the Habsburg were opposing the Ottoman empire: the fight of the prince of Wallachia Michael the Brave (1593-1601) against the Albanian Grand Vizier Sinan Pacha was equated with Alexander's war against Darius, and in the Romanian *Alexandria*, derived from the Serbian *Alexander Romance*, Persians were assimilated with Turks, as in the post-Byzantine rewritings of the ζ recension (see Lica 2004, 63-66). Much later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the same process is at work in the Neo Bulgarian adaptations of the *Alexander Romance*, as shown by Köhler 1973, 173 (mention of Turkish gods beside pagan deities), 192-193, 206-207, 214-218 (transformation of Persians into Turks, opposition islam / christianism).

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Adventures of Alexander in Medieval Turkish

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Recently I published a couple of Alexander stories on the basis of a fragment from the Oriental Institute of the Sankpeterburg Academy.[1] The fragment is bound as an appendix into a volume containing a 16th century copy of the Eastern Turkish Stories of the Prophets - also known as the *Qıṣaṣ-ı Rabghūzī* (Boeschoten 2009). As is clear from their *ductus*, these Alexander stories have been written down by a person who has been working over an extant copy of the Prophets' Stories, restoring some lost portions from another manuscript. I guess these contributions to be from the late 18th century. The fragment consists of 7½ leaves in all, but these are so big and the text is so tightly written that their transcription yields about 30 book pages; one sample page of the manuscript can be found in Appendix I.

The language of the stories (but not that of the emendations of the Prophets' Stories) is basically western Oghuzic. Certain lexical elements point to a connection with Old Anatolian Turkish or early Ottoman Turkish. Other features of the language, however, pertain to Eastern Turkic, more specifically, to 15th century Khwarezmian Turkic. There are some glosses with explanations of certain words and expressions in a Tatar brand of Turkic. Together with the frequent syntactic patterns of Persian origin this led me to speculate to the effect that the stories in the fragment may have been originally written in Iran. I will return to this linguistic question later.

But here our interest is focussed on the content of the stories, of which there are six in all. They are written in prose, inter-dispersed with poems of various lengths (2-35 *baits*) composed in *masnavī* style in a simple type of *ramal*. The stories clearly belong to a cycle containing at least a report on Alexander's Indian and Chinese adventures. As usual, in the separate stories at first Alexander and his retinue set out to conquer some country. The warfare ensuing, however, is hardly described at all. The actual interest is about sight-seeing rides in pursuit of the wonders the newly conquered lands have to offer. A recurring topic is castles. In most cases they have to be conquered. The remarkable feature of the defence systems encountered by Alexander and his men is that, although they are termed magical (*ṭılsımlı*), they are in fact mechanical contraptions.

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[1] Dimitrijeva (2002: 461, no. 2003).

On their way to China they reach the "Encircling Island" (*Jäzīrä-yi Müstadīr*) and there they come upon a castle which appears to contain a magnet inside that attracts and thus kills humans. The issue in this case is confused a little bit, because, strangely enough, Alexander and his army are also attacked by dog-heads pouring out from the castle. This is the only place where we encounter monstrous beings. Although the dog-heads are beaten, Alexander and his party make no further attempt to enter the castle that is vaguely said to be dangerously "enchanted", although the concrete reason (the killer magnet) has been given before. They rather ride on to find the different types of magnets, mentioned by Aristotle:

Text sample 1: types of magnets

> Then Alexander asked Aristotle: "Oh privy minister, about those nine magnets you mentioned. As we have just seen, one of them attracts men. What things do the other ones attract? Tell us and we will listen." The minister said: "Oh king, one of those nine is this one. Another one is the magnet of animals and beasts. It attracts horse and camel, rhinoceros and elephant, leopard and lion – whatever wild beasts there are. The third one attracts the birds flying in the air. And the fourth attracts the calamities that are under the surface of the earth, such as snakes and scorpions, and similar things. And the fifth is the magnet for iron, the sixth the magnet for copper, the seventh the magnet for silver and the eighth the magnet for gold. And the ninth is the magnet of the creatures of the sea. [10] And some scholars claim that there are ten magnets, the tenth being the magnet for wood. That is the one which sends a ship down into a whirlpool, they say. The stone in a whirlpool is the magnet for wood. If a ship at sea comes close to it, it is attracted by it, for a ship is made of wood. The magnet moves it on top of itself and the ship is spun around. The magnet doesn't let it move away, and the ship perishes."

Of course, the last type of magnet is at the same time remindful of the "whirlpool of Alexander" of Arab lore, and of the motif of the Magnetic Mountain. (Stoneman 2008: 126).[2]

The mechanical defence of a castle is fully elaborated in the sixth story. First, the bridge over the castle's moat is defended by a mechanical ram. This blockage of the "magical" ram is finally overcome: Platoon deciphers a text on a steel hammer lying next to the bridge and instructs a companion to hit a medallion on a pillar; as a result the ram jumps into the moat. But the climax comes when the party, after crossing the bridge, tries to enter the castle. The stairs leading up to the entrance appear to be revolving and cause a cannon ball from above gradually to lower, until it finally crushes the intruder. This contraption is tested, in the process of which, characteristically, a foot soldier is experimentally crushed. Finally Aristotle discovers a frieze above the gates on which the solution of the predicament is depicted, and the cannon ball is eliminated and the revolving stair is stopped accordingly.

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[2] Submarine magnets wrecking ships by drawing out their nails also occur in the Travel of Saint Brendan (Middle Dutch version, Willink 2009: 52-53).

Now Alexander and his retinue enter the castle. In it they view a set piece consisting of the figure of a king with a baby child on his lap, with servants in attendance, in gold and silver set with jewels etc. A tablet is found on which the situation is explained in verse; Platoon knows the language and relates: The king was the builder of the castle and the mechanical defence systems. His baby-child was taken away by an ominous "stranger" (*ġurāb*), who must be identified with Azrael. The story ends, also characteristically, with the wholesome looting of the valuable statues in the castle.

The story about the child's birth and death is a pathetic variation on the topic of a mighty king of times past, who has left an inscription for Alexander, well aware that he would pass by some time, to warn him against the vicissitudes of fate (a *mementi mori* theme already present in the γ-version of the pseudo-Callisthenes). The topic is elaborated upon in a story, in which Alexander's party comes upon a splendid dome that contains the grave of the famous hero Narimān (Rostam's grandfather in the *Shāhnāme*). This famous hero has left inscriptions both on a golden tablet and on his giant shield:

Text 2: Narīmān's inscription on a golden tablet.[3]

Şiʿr:	**Verse:**
"Böylä imiş läviḥä ol χaṭ yazan Kį cihān mülki bänüm deyä gezän	"The writer of this text on the tablet was one Who walked around thinking that the world was his
ʻKim bän idüm oş Närīmān-ı zämān Ḥükmümä firmān aydı cümlä cihān	ʻAt my time, Nerīmān was what I was The whole world called my orders command
ʿĀläm içrä bällü idi ärligüm Mäşhūr idi ad ilä särvärligüm	On earth my manliness was obvious Famous were my name and leadership

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[3] Cf. the facsimile in the Appendix, f. 167r, line 28 ff.

Yedi ıqlīm taχtını dutmış idüm	I held the throne of seven climes
Ançа şāhdan fīl ü at ötmiş idüm	Many kings I overcame with elephants and infantry
Kimsä härgīz baŋa qarşu durmadı	No one could measure up to me
Ärlik ilä baŋa qılıç urmadı	Or hit me manly with the sword
Kūh al-Buruz gürzinä şäylä kį war	The Elbruz Mountain, for once,
Żarb olaçaq durmaz idi pāydār	Would not remain upright would I hit it
Qılıçumnuŋ häybätindän äy χidīv	The fierceness of my sword, oh great sovereign
Qāf ṭaġında diträr idi hämmä dīv	Made all demons in the Qāf mountains tremble
Älümä süŋü alıçaq här zämān	Whenever I took a spear in my hands
Ājdähālar qan qaşanurdı hämān	Right away dragons pissed blood
Oqumuŋ päykānı di! päyk-i äcäl	The head of my arrow lo! angel of death
Dūşmān içrä düşirdi al väcäl	Spread bloody panic amongst the enemy
Läşkärüm-nüŋ ḥaddı sanı yoġıdı	My soldiers were innumerable without count
Mūr [u] mälaχ-dan daḥı häm çoġıdı	More manifold than ants and locusts
Oşbu räsim ʿāläm içrä bändaḥı	In this manner I ruled, my friend,
Yedi yüz yıl ḥükm qıldum äy āχī	For seven hundred years on earth
ʿĀqibät erdi äcäl gör näylädi	Finally the last hour came, look what it did!
Tāc u taχtımdan bäni dävr äylädi	It bereft me of crown and throne
Aldı cānum wermädi bir däm amān	Took my soul showed no mercy for a second
Bu ölüm dedikläri näsnä äy cān	That thing they call death, my dear
Läşkärüm hämdaḥı yardım etmädi	My army couldn’t help me either
Qurta[rmadı bän]i ölüm getmädi	Couldn’t save me, death did not go away
Sändaḥı äy salṭanat daʿvā qılan	You as well, who aspire to kingdom
Hämdaḥı bu ʿumra dävlätdür deyän	And also think this lifetime is good luck
Bir neçä gün säni aldar χ^{v}oş dutar	For many days it deceives you, keeps you satisfied
Soŋra alnuŋ aluban qabra atar	Then takes away your luck and throws you in the grave
Bir iki gün istämä yoqdur ŝabāt	Don’t even wish it for a few days, it will not stay
Zīrā hämān dävrilür esäŋ ḥayāt’ ”	For in this way a happy life will wane’ ”

Another topic is presented in yet another story. A certain Fatiḥ Muṭālib is found sitting on a stone and behaves strangely; he is pretending to be the guard of a harem. That makes it clear to those present that he is sitting on a treasure. Indeed, in a cellar under the stone they find another set piece made of gold and jewels, a collection of statues of beautiful ladies. Again the whole collection is gladly accepted as loot and is carried away.

So far I have discussed some of the main threads of this small collection of Alexander stories. In the present company I expect some understanding for the remarkable density of motifs, topics and details in general encountered in even such a short sample. An essential aspect is the closed set of main actors. Alexander himself is not much of a person of flesh and blood. He mostly gives orders to mount and ride on, etc. One characteristic is that he gladly carries off any valuables found as loot. Also, he tends to be jealous of any artful construction encountered. In one story, Alexander and his men are entertained in a castle made of the teeth of fish, in which there are ponds with mechanical fish:

Text 3: competition in the art of constructing toys.

(..) The king said: “Oh ministers, I want a castle and gallery like these ones to be constructed for me as well, including a pond with similar magical contraptions.” Platoon the Wise said: “Oh ruler of the world, this is a trifle matter. But you are on travel, how would it be befitting for you? When we are staying at home, we will construct one – God permitting.” Thereupon they stayed in Māhīb for a week. During that week Platoon constructed a cupola from fish teeth a thousand times as magnificent as the one we have mentioned. Inside it he constructed a pond, with in it wonderful and astonishing fish and animals from gold and silver, such as no mind and understanding can think of. When the ruler of the world saw it, it was greatly to his liking.

Then the minister Aristotle said: “Oh Alexander, hold court tomorrow and invite Mahrāyib; your servant also has constructed an enchanted object. Let them see, whether it resembles the spectacle offered by that pond.” Thereupon that day and night the king held a banquet. The next morning he went to his quarters and set up an adorned court. He sat down and sent out Gharāqī, who brought Mahrāyib, and also his commanders and princes. The king spoke: “Oh Mahrāyib, my chosen minister also has constructed an enchanted object. Let him bring it for us to see, whether it resembles the wonders of your royal castle.” Thereupon they saw how Aristotle let a servant carry a chest on his back right before the king’s throne. The servant put the chest down and the chosen minister sat down on top of the chest. They all watched on to see what the minister was going to get out of the chest. Then he got a peacock out of the chest, made of white silver; it was adorned and decorated with all kinds of adornments, so that it could not be distinguished from a living peacock. When the wise man put it on the ground, it stood on its feet as if it was alive. It looked to its right and to its left and then stirred. Then he got fourteen peacock chicks – that is, little ones – made of red gold, out of the chest. They all came to life to the right and to the left of the peacock. And they stirred into motion and walked about swaying. Thereupon the minister himself sat down on the chest, and the peacock also started to walk. Those twelve chicks of it walked with it, and just like the chicks of a living peacock would do while walking, they stirred and shook the feathers of their wings and tails. While they were shaking them, they scattered right and left from the ends of their feathers garnets and rubies and emeralds and pearls. And the ground they walked

> on was covered by all sorts of shapes, as if it had been adorned, and was coloured azure. Those chicks made of gold walked around in order to collect those rubies and jewels with their beaks; they fought to snatch them from each other's beaks, and gave them to their mother into her beak. Then that peacock put all the jewels in her beak at the very end of her tail, and scattered them far away and close by. Again her chicks ran off with sudden speed, collected them, snatching them from one another and put them in their mother's beak. They did so a number of times. All those present, seeing this piece of art, hailed Aristotle (…)

Certain members of Alexander's entourage have special tasks and represent specific topics. Alexander's main counsellors, naturally, are Platoon and Aristotle. Platoon is very much the philologist who deciphers and reads the inscriptions when found, in whatever language they may have been written. Aristotle is there to find the solutions to practical problems, such as the "spells" they are confronted with, and to add weight to the admonitions formulated in the inscriptions. The other philosophers of the entourage are only mentioned in passing by, and a sprinkling of local wise men may contribute some pieces of information. The role played by the wise men (*ḥakīm*), in this case very much focused on Aristotle and Platoon, is thus more or less the same as the "philosophes techniciens" in the *Dārābnāme* (Gaillard 2005, 48). Besides, one very important person is Alexander's (and Aristotle's) handyman, a certain Gharāqī,[4] who is sent ahead whenever there are difficult situations and strange contraptions to be investigated. Besides, there is the person of Fatiḥ who is found sitting on the stone which covers a treasure. The action of the stories revolves around this limited group of actors.

In the meantime I have discovered that there exists an Old Anatolian Turkish source for the Alexander stories in my fragment after all. A voluminous manuscript kept at the Turkish Linguistic Society (TDK) in Ankara contains some 900 pages of Alexander stories.[5] In the case of two stories in the Sankpeterburg fragment can be connected univocally on the basis of the poems, which are virtually identical in both cases. The work represented in the Ankara manuscript is attributed to a certain Ḥamzavī, a brother of Aḥmedī, the writer of the most prestigious of *Iskendernāme*'s in Anatolia (dated 1390). The very different style levels of the two *Iskendernāme*'s makes this identification surprising, but it seems to be safely established by the mention made by Aşık Çelebi, in his *Mešāʿiru š-šuʿarā*, of an *Iskendernāme* in prose, written by Aḥmedī's brother Ḥamzavī, in 24 volumes (Ünver 1975). This information is repeated in several other sources. In fact, different chapters and portions of Ḥamzavī’s *Iskendernāme* are mentioned in the catalogues of a number of libraries: several in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin and the Topkapı Saray Library, one in the İstanbul Municipal Library and in Vienna, three in the Vatican collection; some of these are probably other works.[6] Considering the descriptions in these catalogues I would offer as an educated guess that the manuscript of the Turkish Language Society represents about one third of the monumental work.

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[4] Probably a corruption of *ʿIrāqī*, as is borne out by the Anatolian texts to be mentioned below.

[5] Ms. TDK no.150.

This means for once that the assumption of an Iranian origin of the work is incorrect: the Chaghatay (Eastern Turkic) characteristics of the language are not original, but have been introduced by the reproduction of the stories in a Tatar context, presumably in Kazan.[7] Secondly, the compiler of the collection from the Sankpeterburg manuscript made a specific selection from the original, or from a collection of stories derived thereof, with a specific emphasis, namely the stories which are inclined towards a mechanical view of the world. I have not found the time to thoroughly go through the Ankara manuscript. So far I have retrieved two of the six stories in my edition, which is all there is probably: the stories about the different magnets and the story about the dome in which Narimān lies buried. Furthermore, one thing is clear from a cursory overview: the stories in the original are much more drawn out. What is true of the remark made by Stoneman (2008: 39) to the effect that Southgate (1978) offered a translation of only part of her popular Persian *Iskendernāme* in prose, and contented herself with abstracts of most of the stories because they are “very repetitive”, is also valid for Ḥamzavī’s work. In this sense the writer of the Sankpeterburg fragment has done a fine job and has produced a most readable version. The story about the different magnets for instance has been considerably shortened and speeded up. Lengthy descriptions of battles and their preparations are missing.

A number of topics encountered in the Ḥamzavī manuscript from Ankara are not represented in my fragment. On several occasions Satan turns up in disguise, presenting himself as a local peasant (*šaḥrānišīn*), and tries to entice Alexander with wrong advice to detrimental actions. This bad influence is counteracted by regular appearances of Khizr. There are also lengthy conversations between Alexander and pious men (*zāhid*). Besides, lengthy exchanges of embassies and letters occur as a prelude to battles. The person acting as an envoy is always the same Bartūs, who is often accompanied by Keyd, the Indian king Keydāvar who made peace with Alexander. One topic occurring in my fragment actually, not unexpectedly, occurs twice: the man called Fatiḥ Mutālib, who pretends to be an harem-guard while sitting on a stone, is encountered, also sitting on a stone pretending to be an architect in one case, and an astrologer in the other (in the cellar under the stone treasures of appropriate objects are found).

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[6] Such a constellation suggests that quite a lot more manuscripts must be around in Turkey. Yelten (2009: 676-683), for example, in his reading materials presents the beginning of a story from an unspecified Ḥamzavī manuscript about an expedition of Alexander to find the source of the Nile.

[7] Especially tricky are some characteristic features of the Khwarezmian Turkic phase of the written language, such as *-d- > -z- (e.g., *kezin* and not *keyin* ‘after’), which appear to be especially long-living in the brand of Chaghatay written on the territory of the Golden Horde.

As has been remarked, in the Sankpeterburg fragment monstrous races only occur in the form of the dog-heads attacking Alexander and his men, who are mentioned very much in passing by. This widespread topic of monstrous beings is much more broadly represented in Ḥamzavī's work; among other creatures, there we find the headless people, with medallion-shaped bodies that include their faces. It is, however, much too early to offer a complete overview of the motives contained in Ḥamzavī's work as a whole. Completely absent in any case is the role played by Alexander as a missionary of Islam in the *Dārābnāme*.

The stories from the two sources I have briefly discussed here represent a tradition very different from the aristocratic versified *Iskendernāme*s, including Ahmedī's. The Turkic versions are inspired mostly by the *Shāhnāme* and by Nizāmī Ganjavī. In the East we have the famous *Sadd-ı İskandar* of Ali Sher Navā'ī, on which Bertel's based his treatise on the quest for philosophical truth in this work (Bertel's 1948). Of course there are other stories about Alexander; one source are the *Qiṣaṣu l-Anbiyā'*. In the Turkic case, the earliest mention of Alexander/Dhulqarnain is found in Maḥmūd Qashgharī's famous dictionary. In this work, however, the references to Alexander are mostly limited to specimens of folk-etymology (see Dankoff 1973).[8]

Like in the Persian case, many more popular Alexander stories must have been around that were presented by storytellers (*naqqāl, qiṣṣaχān*). Naturally, this circumstance opens the road for incursion of all kinds of narrative material from other sources. The role written products like the present one have played as an interface between different stylistic levels remains a matter of speculation. Significantly, the Ankara manuscript of Ḥamzavī's work occasionally (that is, unsystematically) has headings for new stories with a count of "sessions" (*mağlis*). To illustrate the state of the art on the

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[8] To take one example about the origin of the name of the tribe Čigil: "When Dhu l-Qarnayn came to the land of Argu the clouds loosed their founts and the roads became muddy (…) He said in Persian: *īn čigil ast* 'what a mud this is.' "

Turkic side it suffices to mention that up to date there exists no critical edition even of Aḥmedī's *Iskendernāme*. Overall, we have to reckon with parallel and intermingled developments on the Persian and on the Turkic side in the way the Alexander material is treated, both with regard to the highly literary versions and the more folksy ones. Unfortunately, and remarkably, I have found hardly any correspondences of the Turkish stories with the Persian stories edited by Southgate (1978).

As for the preoccupation with mechanical contraptions: In the *Dārābnāme* mention is made of "cavaliers de cuivre" (Gaillard 2005: 41). Some similar *mirabilia* may be found in the *Thousand and One Nights* and other "popular" Arabic literature (Doufikar-Aerts, this volume). Alexander's jealousy about exquisite structures owned by others, too, is reflected in the Arabic *Sīrat al-Iskandar*: there, he has a copy constructed of a copper dome that, among other things, contains a planetary.

Thus, I obtained no real insight into the question, where the emphasis on the technical gadgets in my text (the Sankpeterburg fragment) comes from. There are some more or less vague parallels to be found in popular stories in Persian and Arabic. Also, as compared to the original, from all the stories available this text seems to prefer specific topics from the Ḥamzavī original. Presumably more can be said about all this after this later monumental work has been evaluated at least to some extent.

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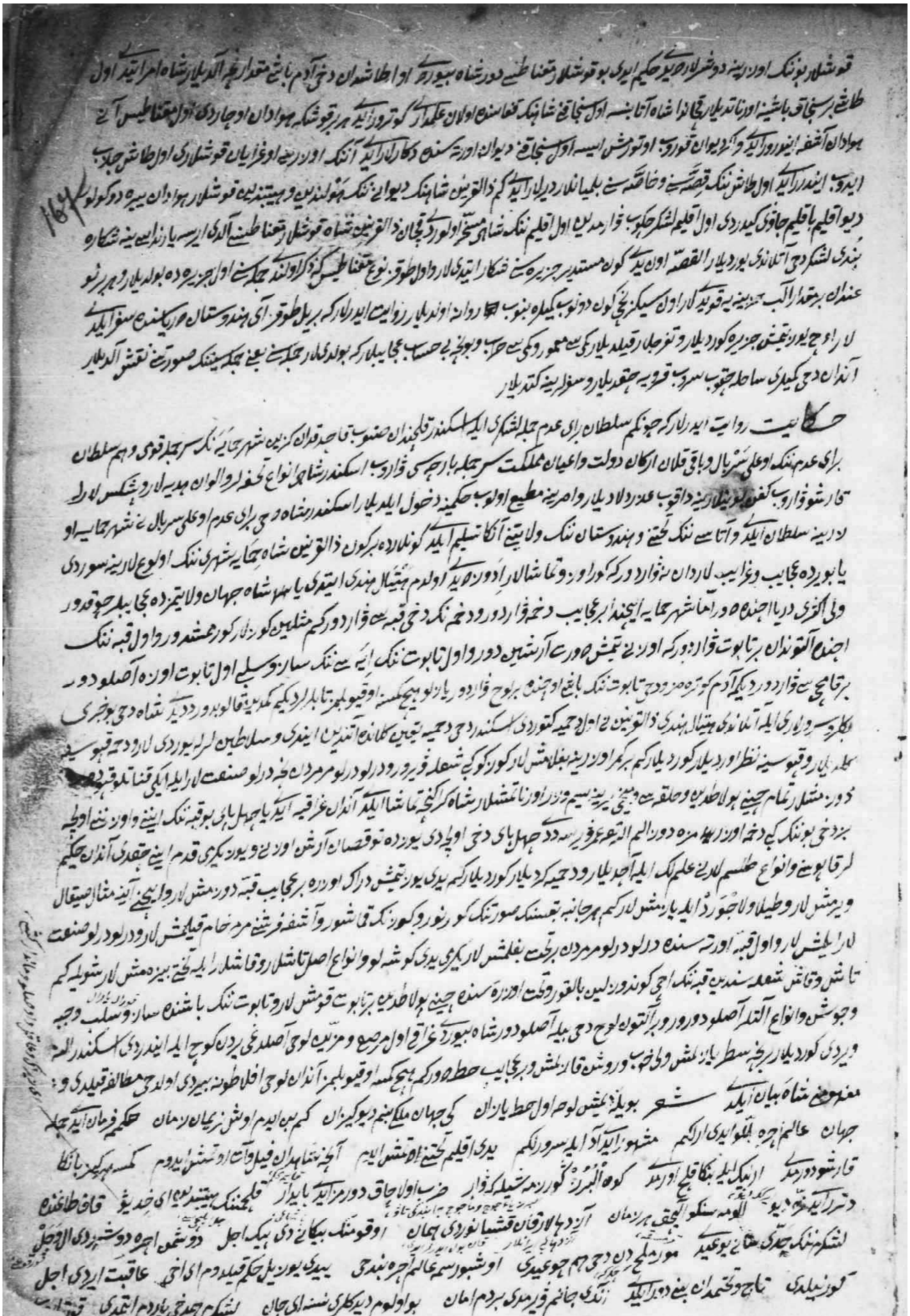
Appendix 1



Some Talk of Alexander

Myth and Politics in the North-West Frontier of British India

WARWICK BALL

John Lennon's famous claim in 1966 that the Beatles were more famous than Jesus found its echo when Richard Stoneman stated quite rightly that the *Alexander Romance* has been as influential in literature as the Gospels, making itself felt from Iceland to China and Russia to Ethiopia. It resurfaces in works as divergent as the *Qur'an*, the *Shahnameh*, the *Adventures of Sindbad*, *Baron Munchausen* and a huge range of medieval and later stories and epics.[1] To Stoneman's impressive list one might add Rustaveli's Georgian epic, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* and modern fantasies such as C S Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy.[2] In this paper we observe how the *Alexander Romance* continues this influence in modern politics.

Classicising in Victorian Britain

The title of this paper refers to *The British Grenadiers*, the regimental marching song of the Grenadier Guards as well as several other British regiments.[3] The text probably dates from the War of Spanish Succession of the early eighteenth century, a period when Britain began to look increasingly to ancient Greece and Rome for its identity. This is reflected not only in the Classical heroes – Alexander, Hercules, Hector, Lysander – to whom

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[1] Stoneman 1991: 'Introduction'.

[2] In particular the former's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *Silver Chair* and the latter's *The Amber Spyglass.*

[3] 'Some talk of Alexander, and some of Hercules.
Of Hector and Lysander, and such great names as these.
But of all the world's great heroes, there's none that can compare.
With a tow, row, row, row, row, row, to the British Grenadiers.'

British soldiers are compared in song, but in almost every other area of public life that gathered pace over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reaching its height in the Victorian period. Such increase in Classicising in Britain over these two centuries corresponds exactly to the rise of the British Empire.

In the eighteenth century the 'Grand Tour' was an essential culmination to the education of the young British gentleman: the rediscovery of ancient Rome. In the nineteenth century the emphasis changed. The Grand Tour was essentially aristocratic with its emphasis on architecture (i.e., sketching ruins): nineteenth century Classicism was more middle class with an emphasis on literature and history.[4] A 'Classical education' – Greek and Latin – was effectively compulsory in most British private schools where it was deemed essential training for running an empire: Latin, in effect, was considered more important for administering India than Sanskrit was (few, if any, British schools taught Indian languages). Prime Minister William Pitt the Elder recommends Horace and Virgil to his son as 'the finest lessons of the age to imbibe,'[5] and Matthew Arnold's influential *Culture and Anarchy. An essay in political and social criticism* in 1869 emphasises the study of the Greek classics as the only solution to the social and political problems of the age.[6] New editions of the Greek and Roman classics were produced, and museums were stuffed with Greek and Roman antiquities – not only the British Museum (with its controversial Elgin Marbles), but university and provincial museums as well.

It is easy to see why. In an expanding empire, Rome was the ultimate and the natural model: as empires go, this was the big one, and European history ever since antiquity has never tired of reinventing itself in various Roman guises: from Charlemagne's revival of the imperial title in the ninth century to Rienzi's quixotic revival in the fourteenth century and Mussolini's more dubious revival in the twentieth.[7] This was manifest in an explosion of Neo-Classical architecture (effectively Neo-Roman – Pytheas would have had a fit!) and other public art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries throughout Britain (Pl. 1). But this made Britain little different to other European imperial powers: Neo-Classical architecture characterised the capitals of other colonial empires as well, from St Petersburg to Paris (Amster-

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[4] Den Boer in Haagsma *et.al.* 2003: 14-15.

[5] Quoted in Sachs 2010: 18.

[6] Den Boer in Haagsma *et.al.* 2003: 14.

[7] See Bondanella 1987; Edwards 1999.

Plate 1. The Neo-Classical revival in Britain: the unfinished replica of the Parthenon on Carlton Hill overlooking Edinburgh. This and other Edinburgh buildings (notably the Royal High School and the National Art Gallery), as well as the Scottish Enlightenment, led to Edinburgh's epithet of 'Athens of the North.'

dam being a notable exception). Furthermore, Rome as an imperial model was a two-edged sword, for it also represented decline and fall (*pace* Gibbon), something that the 'empire upon which the sun never set' might not wish to compare itself. Hence, by the later nineteenth century, Britain's Classicising changed subtly as it found another model, an empire to which even ancient Rome looked back as its ultimate ideal. This was the empire of Alexander the Great (and it is important to remember that the Greek Revival in architecture occurred in Britain *after* the Roman Revival – and occurred in Britain before the rest of Europe).[8]

British identification with the empire of Alexander

Pierre Briant emphasises that European imperial expansion was seen as the continuation of a process begun by Alexander:

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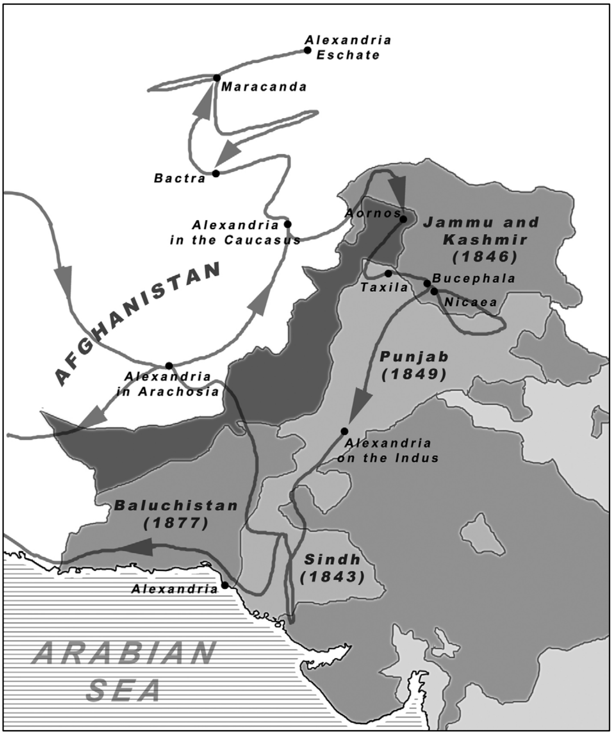
[8] Summerson 1980: 95-7.

> ‘First there is what might be called European colonial historiography, which in its search for models and precedents often turned to the “great colonizers” of Antiquity, such as Alexander. Mimicking Plutarch’s presentation, historians have presented Alexander as a generous, chivalrous conqueror who brought progress to a stagnant Asia. The reestablishment of peace, opening of roads, founding of towns, and monetization of the Persian treasuries were the vectors and methods of unprecedented economic and commercial expansion. We will not dwell long on the failings of this reconstruction, which is based primarily on the assumption that a conquering and commercial Europe was culturally superior.’[9]

For Britain, there was an added attraction to the model when, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the British Empire for the first time overlapped that of Alexander’s. Britain extended its empire into the area where the great conqueror had trod before when it expanded into north-western India, particularly after the Sikh Wars of 1845-49 which culminated in the annexation of the Punjab and the extension of British India to the North-West Frontier (Map 1 and Appendix 1). For the first time British regiments fought on the same territory that Alexander’s phalanxes had fought millennia before. The Battle of Chillianwala in January 1849 – a British defeat at the hands of the Sikhs – was fought on the same left bank of the Jhelum River


Alexandria Eschate
Maracanda
Bactra
Alexandria in the Caucasus
Aornos
Jammu and Kashmir (1846)
Taxila
Bucephala
Nicaea
AFGHANISTAN
Punjab (1849)
Alexandria in Arachosia
Alexandria on the Indus
Baluchistan (1877)
Sindh (1843)
Alexandria
ARABIAN SEA

Map 1. Map of Alexander’s campaigns in India and the extension of British India into the North-West Frontier.

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[9] Briant 2002: 901. See also Briant in Haagsma *et.al.* 2003.

Plate 2. Site of Alexander’s Battle of the Hydaspes: the left bank of the Jhelum River, seen in the distance.

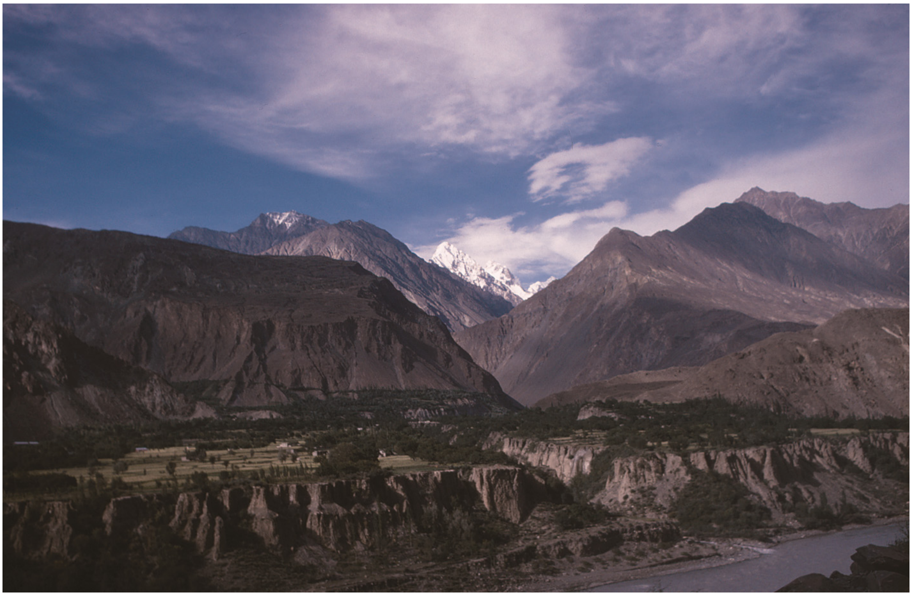

Plate 3. Site of the 1891 Hunza-Nagar campaign: the fort of Nilt, which the British captured from below, was on top of the gully in the centre of the picture.

Plate 4. Site of Alexander's assault on the Rock of Aornos, identified by Aurel Stein with the hill of Pirsar rising to the right steeply from the banks of the Indus River.

only a short distance upstream from Alexander's Battle of the Hydaspes in June 326 BC against King Porus (Pl. 2).[10] The Hunza-Nagar campaign in the upper waters of the Indus in 1891 saw British forces under Colonel Algernon Durand successfully capture the strongly defended hill fort of Nilt (Pl. 3) in a near impossible assault (where three Victoria Crosses were awarded), a feat comparable to Alexander's similarly heroic assault against the Rock of Aornos, also on the upper Indus at modern Pir-Sar, in 326 BC (Pl. 4).[11] The identification of the British Empire with that of Alexander was in effect explicitly stated by a senior British soldier and diplomat of the Government of India, Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler, when he referred to the time 'when over 2,000 years ago the Greeks crossed the Hindu Kush to found the *first* European Empire of India [italics added].'[12]

A high point of Victorian Britain's identification of its Indian Empire with the Classical past was marked by the Delhi Durbar of 1877 when Queen Victoria was officially proclaimed Empress of India by the Viceroy, Lord

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[10] Quite possibly also a defeat for Alexander.

[11] For the Hunza-Nagar campaign see Knight 1893.

[12] Fraser-Tytler 1953: 139. Also emphasised by Lee 1996: 76.

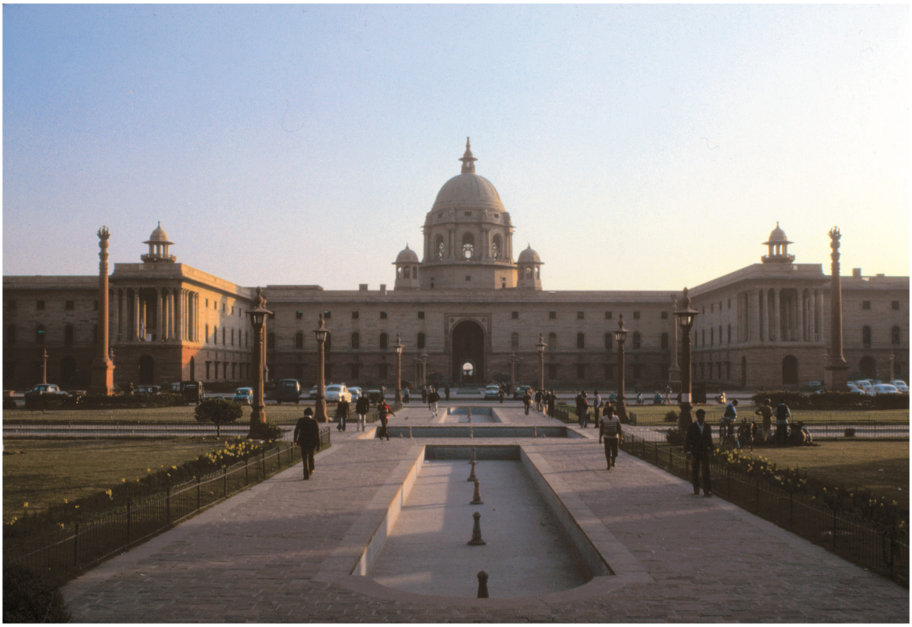

Plate 5. Edwin Lutyens' & Herbert Baker's New Delhi: the Viceroy's Palace (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) flanked by the Secretariat buildings. Although there is some concession to Indian architecture (such as the *chattris*) the overwhelming style is Neo-Classical.

Lytton. The ceremonial chosen for the occasion deliberately evoked Roman triumphs, reinforced by Lytton's proclamation of Queen Victoria as, quite literally, Caesar: the Indian title chosen for her was *Kaiser-i Hind*.[13] The Lytton family themselves appropriately encapsulated British classicising. His daughter married the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, responsible (in collaboration with Herbert Baker) for the design of New Delhi which is notable for its Neo-Classical elements: the Viceroy's Residency (now Rashtrapati Bhavan), the Gate of India in conscious imitation of a Roman triumphal arch, and the showpiece of 'Lutyen's Delhi' at Connaught Place with its Classical colonnades (Pl. 5). Lytton's father was the eminent Victorian writer, statesman and man of letters, Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, a noted Hellenophile who was even offered the crown of Greece (which he declined) in 1862 following the abdication of King Otto of Bavaria. Bulwer Lytton was awarded a full state funeral on his death in 1871 and buried in Westminster Abbey.[14]

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[13] Cohn in Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983.

Hence, the British in their incursions into the North-West Frontier and the adjacent parts of Afghanistan in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, chose to see signs of Alexander everywhere. Jonathan Lee writes:

> ‘Underlying all of the British frontier policy was a European obsession with classical history, and Alexander the Great in particular. Successive generations of British political and military officers, viceroys and civil servants were educated in a system which was steeped in the Greek and Latin works which Alexander’s conquests spawned. When, at the turn of the nineteenth century, the East India Company’s attention was drawn to the Central Asian region, it was to these sources that officials turned for information about the human and military geography of the regions beyond the Khyber and the Amu Darya. The journals of explorers and military strategists, such as Edward Stirling, Alexander Burnes, Arthur Conolly and many others, are shot through with references to Herodotus, Plutarch, Quintus Curtius Rufus, etc.’

Lee further points out that to this day, Classical geographical names in the region remain in European common usage rather than current indigenous ones: Oxus, Jaxartes, Indus and Bactria, for example, as opposed to Amu Darya, Syr Darya, Mehran and Badakhshan.[15]

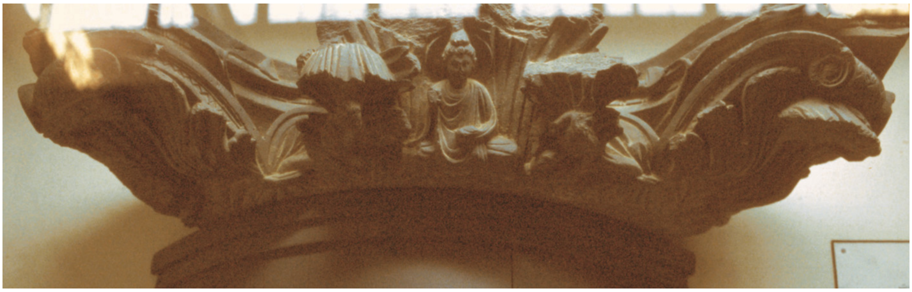

Plate 6. The art of Gandhara of the first few centuries AD found in northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan derived from Greek art but depicted Buddhist motifs, such as this Corinthian capital with a relief of a seated Buddha.

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[14] See Lutyens 1979; Mitchell 2003; Oswyn Murray’s introduction to Bulwer Lytton 2004:4.

[15] Lee 1996: 74-8. See also Holdich 1910.

The tacit identification of the British Empire with that of Alexander was reinforced by the discovery of the astonishing art of Gandhara in this region, self-evidently derived from ancient Greek art (Pl. 6). This has, of course, long since been demonstrated to belong to the Indo-Greek kingdom that was later and quite separate from Alexander's conquests,[16] but nonetheless it served to reinforce to the Victorian mind that the British Empire really was stepping into the shadow of Alexander's epic conquests – or at least bathing in his reflected glory. This prompted a frenzy of scholarly ventures 'looking for Alexander' throughout the nineteenth century that continued into the early twentieth, beginning with Charles Masson's archaeological explorations in the 1830s when he accumulated huge collections of Graeco-Bactrian coins and other antiquities (now mostly in the British Museum), and culminating in Sir Aurel Stein's more scientific search *On Alexander's Tracks to the Indus* nearly a century later.[17] The pioneering academic studies of Alexander by W. W. Tarn, his *Alexander the Great* and *The Greeks in Bactria and India* published in 1948 and 1951, must be seen against this essentially imperial background.

Descendants of Alexander's army

Furthermore, by the late nineteenth century there circulated rumours that can only be described as electrifying: hidden within the mountain fastness of the North-West Frontier were actual living descendants of Alexander's army. Such astonishing rumours even at the time were suspected to be the fiction that they are, but they fed into an imperial imagination all too ready to identify with the Classical past: and the Classical past's most heroic figure at that.

The stories of descendants of Alexander's army were in part prompted partly, of course, by the discovery of Greek related art in the region. But they were also prompted by the discovery of peoples in the Hindu Kush who, in contrast to the peoples of India, were blond and blue-eyed. This 'lost tribe of Greeks' was associated with various peoples of the region. In writing of the Pathans (or Pashtuns, the ethnic Afghans), for example, Sir Olaf Caroe writes:

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[16] See the summary of the evidence in, for example, Ball 2000: 139-48, with refs.

[17] Wilson 1841; Masson 1842; Stein 1928. See also Ball 1982, 2: App. 3; Ball 2008: 137-9. Note too the current Masson Project in the British Museum. See http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/masson_project.aspx and Errington 1999.

> ‘It is often said now upon the Frontier that such-and-such a tribe, or even family, claims Grecian or Macedonian blood inherited from Alexander or his soldiers. The Afridis, for instance, have their tradition of an admixture of Greek blood. They point to their Grecian features, and indeed many a young Afridi might stand as a model for Apollo, while the Afridi elder can display the gravity of Zeus. There are young Pathan warriors, not only among the Afridis, whose strong classical profile and eagle eye recall the features of Alexander himself. It is said that Alexander's army in its passage through this country left behind deserters who mingled their blood with that of the people of Tirah and the Khaibar.’[18]

Caroe further emphasises the point by comparing a photograph of a Pathan tribesman with an image of Alexander the Great alongside (Pl. 7).[19] Sir Olaf Caroe himself was one of the last of the soldier-administrators of British India, retiring as Governor of North-West Frontier Province, who went on to write the definitive history of the Pathans.

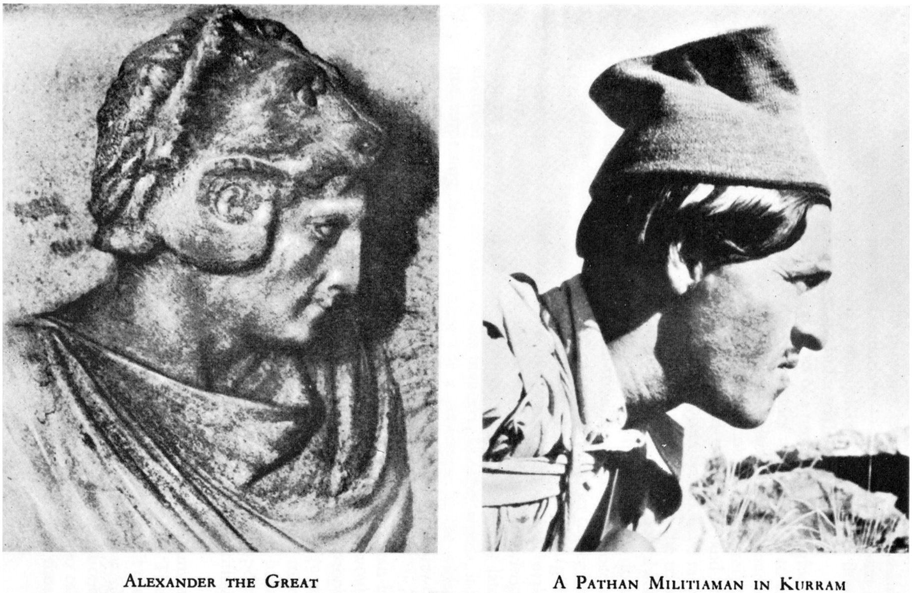

Plate 7. ‘A young Afridi might stand as a model for Apollo.’ Comparison of a modern Afghan with an idealised coin portrait of Alexander. (From Caroe 1958: pl.).

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[18] Caroe 1958: 44.

[19] All attempts have been made to obtain permission to reproduce this image from the estate of Sir Olaf Caroe.

Plate 8. Kalash Kafir girls at the village of Bomboret in Chitral.

The purported Alexandrine descent was also applied to the ruling families of Hunza, Nagar and Gilgit (and the Nagar-Gilgit campaign of 1891 has been compared to Alexander's Aornos campaign of 326 BC above).[20] Most of all, however, it was applied to the so-called 'Kalash Kafirs' of the Hindu Kush, found on either side of the British Indian and Afghan border, numbering approximately 100,000 in present day Chitral in Pakistan and Nuristan in Afghanistan (Pl. 8). They are a distinct ethnic group, differing culturally, linguistically and – most of all – religiously from neighbouring groups, having maintained their distinction due to their extreme isolation in their mountain fastness until recent times. The isolated mountain communities speak several related languages belonging to the Indo-European group, but quite separate from the Iranian group that comprises Persian and Pashtu. Those in Afghanistan were pagan until converted to Islam in the 1890s (when it was known as Kafiristan, 'land of the pagans' as opposed to Nuristan, 'land of light'); only the Kalash communities in Pakistan still openly retain their pagan religion. Many other aspects of their culture and ways of life were also distinct and it was partly their distinction that gave rise to the stories of their Alexandrine descent, but most of all it was their physical appearance, which was very 'European' looking and occasionally of blond colouring.[21]

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[20] Dani 1991: 116.

It is the Kafirs and their purported association with Alexander that formed the basis of Kipling's famous story, 'The Man who would be King' published in 1888 and made into a popular film by John Huston in 1974 starring Michael Caine, Sean Connery, Saeed Jaffrey and Christopher Plummer. The story revolves around two likeable British soldiers of fortune who make their way into Kafiristan, a land that had supposedly not been penetrated by Europeans since Alexander, with the intention of setting themselves up as rulers of a kingdom. In Kafiristan one of the soldiers is 'recognised' as a descendant of Alexander himself and so took a local wife and was elevated to kingship (temporarily, until the ruse is discovered). In the film version the Alexander link is taken further by the wife being called Roxanne and the discovery of a lost Greek city, still known as 'Sikandargahr' (Alexandria), of Greek architectural styles and containing Alexander's lost treasure.[22]

Kipling's story and Huston's film are based upon a combination of hearsay and real characters in the tumultuous Frontier society of Victorian Britain. Kipling himself refers to Rajah Brooke and the 'White Rajahs' of Sarawak in the story, but Kipling's characters had closer counterparts, probably based upon a combination of the real-life Frontier soldiers of fortune, the American Josiah Harlan and the Scottish Alexander Gardiner.[23] Such larger than life adventurers were not uncommon in North-western India in the nineteenth century – one, the celebrated hero John Nicholson for example, even had a religious cult founded in his honour (the *Nikulsaynis*, to Nicholson's own considerable embarassment). Both Harlan and Gardiner travelled extensively in Afghanistan with highly embellished accounts of their travels reaching India, and both took Afghan wives of supposedly royal blood. Alexander Gardiner in particular, whom Kipling might well have met, became a celebrated character in retirement in Kashmir, had stories of lost 'Greek' remains in Afghanistan and was probably the main model for Kipling's hero.

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[21] See Bellew 1891 (repr 1973): 143-6; Adamec 1985: 343-65; Vogelsang 2002: 32-5.

[22] The lost 'Greek' city of Sikandargahr is solely John Huston's, and does not appear in the Kipling story. Coincidentally, however, in the story itself Kipling does refer the two soldiers to John Wood's *Journey to the Source of the Oxus* (1872) which, on pp 259-60, does actually describe a visit to a real lost Greek city: Ai Khanum, although the Greek nature of the site was not recognised until the French excavations there beginning in the 1960s. Perhaps researchers in the cinema industry are often more thorough than we often credit them.

[23] McIntyre 2004; Grey 1929: 265-91.

From fiction to fact

Today, the idea that the Kalash are descendants of Alexander's army has become, if not exactly established fact, at least accepted wisdom that is related unquestioningly in numerous travel accounts and websites. The 1997 BBC Television series *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great*, for example, featured a fireside meeting in Chitral with 'the descendants of the last survivors of the Macedonian army which had burst across Asia like a meteor.'[24] A recent *Daily Telegraph* article refers to the Kalash as descendants of Alexander, as do numerous Greek and Macedonian websites, and many Kalash themselves now believe this.[25] So widespread is this belief that 'Hellenic Aid,' a Greek NGO that is Greece's official overseas development assistance programme, has established a Development Education Centre in Bomboret, the main Kalash community in the Kalash Valley of Chitral in Pakistan to encourage the Greek language and civilisation and to finance young Kalash to travel to the 'Greek homeland' for education.[26]

One need hardly say that modern scientific archaeological, linguistic, ethnographical and DNA researches on the Kalash have shown no traces of any connections with Alexander or the Greeks.[27] In the pioneering study of the Kalash made in 1890-91 by George Robertson, the British Agent at Gilgit, the Kalash had only the haziest stories of their origin. The Kalash informed Robertson of vague links to the Arab Quraysh tribe, to 'London' and to the 'Russians,' but there was not a single mention of the Greeks or Alexander.[28] It was only Robertson himself who makes a connection with Alexander; the Kalash made no such connection.[29] The more cautious H W Bellew's pioneering study of the ethnology of Afghanistan produced at the same time made no hint of such a connection.[30]

It seems almost as unnecessary to refute such fiction as it is the Loch Ness Monster. The question one must ask is how it came about? The associations that the Kalash made with the Quraysh, London and the Russians, whilst equally spurious, are nonetheless revealing: they are names associated with *power*. These are names that the Kalash would have vaguely heard about from their neighbours, recently in the case of 'London' and 'Russians,' more distantly in case of 'Quraysh.'[31] Hence, an association with Alexander would be eagerly adopted once it was suggested by an outsider, however spurious. For example, Safdar Ali, the Mir of Hunza in 1889, makes a passing reference to Alexander in a conversation with Francis Younghusband. By the next page Younghusband is already referring to him as a 'successor to Alexander' – and is at pains to point out Safdar Ali's 'European' complexion and features. By 1930 an entirely fictitious account of the Alexandrine descent of the ruling families of Hunza, Nagar and Gilgit was compiled.[32] When referring to the Alexandrine claims by the rulers of the Hindu Kush, even Tarn long ago rightly commented on 'the vanity of human wishes that … the one thing which still survives there in living form is a legend based on a fiction.'[33]

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[24] Wood 1997: 8.

[25] 'Taliban targets descendants of Alexander the Great,' *Daily Telegraph* 21 September 2009.

[26] http://www.hellenicaid.gr/frontoffice/portal.asp?cpage=RESOURCE&cresrc=175&cnode=54&clang=1.

[27] See Bashir & Israr-ud-Din 1996; Young et.al. 2000, with references.

[28] Robertson 1896: Ch. XI.

[29] Robertson 1896: 162.

[30] Bellew 1891 (repr 1973): 143-6.

The superficial 'European' appearance of many of the peoples of the region led many to associate them with Greeks. In associating the Kalash with Greeks, for example, Robertson writes: 'Some of them have the heads of philosophers and statesmen. Their features are Aryan, and their mental capabilities are considerable.'[34] The period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period when racial theories were particularly prevalent. Houston Stewart Chamberlain's hugely influential *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, which formed the basis of the Hitler's racial policies, went through six editions in Britain between 1910 and 1913.[35] Even if such racial claims could be entertained for a moment, one must remember that only a very small minority of the Kalash are blond and blue-eyed, that Greeks in general and (almost certainly) Alexander in particular were dark haired and brown-eyed (the only ancient portrait of Alexander that might be based upon an original, the Pompeii Mosaic, shows him thus), that Alexander was not exactly leading an army of blond and blue-eyed Scandinavians, and that Alexander was in any case a Macedonian, not a Greek.[36]

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[31] In this context it is worth pointing out that 'Qurayshi' or its variants ('Kureishi' etc) is a much more popular surname in modern Pakistan than in Arabia.

[32] Younghusband 1896: 251-2; Dani 1991: 116.

[33] Tarn 1951: 408.

[34] Robertson 1896: 165. The idea that some Greeks might just as easily be as plain-looking, bone-headed and more familiar with a plough than Plato as their English counterparts never occurred to the Victorian romantic mind.

[35] British Library Catalogue.

[36] In the Balkans, blond appearance did not become prevalent until the Slav migrations of the seventh century AD. The essentially racist assumption that blond and blue eyes can

The earliest reference to descendants of Alexander is by Marco Polo in the fourteenth century. However, Polo was referring to supposed claims made by the rulers of Badakhshan, not of North-western India, and the editors further point out that such claims had died out by the nineteenth century.[37] The first reference to the Kalash claim to Greek descent was made by the British Envoy to Afghanistan Mountstuart Elphinstone in 1808 (the court at that time based in Peshawar), referring to a source dated 1794.[38] Polo's reference in any case is referring to rulers claiming descent from 'Zulcarnain,' or Dhu'l-qarnayn; it is Polo who then links it with Alexander.

The association of Alexander with the great warrior and hero Dhu'l-qarnayn 'two-horned' of the *Qur'an* is, of course, an entire separate study of itself and has already been extensively investigated.[39] References to Dhu'l-qarnayn occur mainly in *Sura* 18 of the *Qur'an*. Dhu'l-qarnayn came to be associated with Alexander the Great in the *Shahnameh* and other literary works of the Islamic period, where Alexander is transformed into Sikandar, the son of Darius III and a great conqueror and hero, probably from its conflation with the *Alexander Romance* of pseudo-Callisthenes.[40] However, according to the tenth century Central Asian historian and scientist, al-Biruni, Dhu'l-qarnayn is possibly to be identified with the fourth century

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only be associated with western Europeans is still prevalent. A recent example of this has been the famous 'Tarim mummies,' the discovery of near-perfectly preserved bodies in the desert areas of Xinjiang in north-western China thousands of years old, many of which have blond hair. See Mallory & Mair 2000. This has led to assumptions of 'immigrants from the West' with near impossible reconstructions of ancient colonisation of China from Europe, with all its implications of 'white supremacy.' The present author recalls when, at the end of a public lecture in the 1990s concerning Classical derived art in Afghanistan, a member of the audience related how their daughter disappeared in eastern Afghanistan in the 1970s during an overland journey that was popular with that generation then, but the family still firmly believed she must be still alive because the 'natives' of the region revered 'white girls' because they themselves were descended from Alexander's army. Natural delicacy prevented me from disillusioning them, but both incidents are salutary examples of the power of sub-conscious racist ideas still, de-Nazification notwithstanding: white = 'us,' brown = 'them.'

[37] Yule & Cordier 1903: 157 & fn. 1.

[38] Elphinstone 1815: 373.

[39] E.g., Stoneman 2008: Ch 8.

[40] Although even in the *Shahnameh*, the transformation of Alexander/Sikandar is not as heroic as often thought: in several passages Sikandar is likened to the evil mythical kings Zahhak and Afrasiab, both the very embodiment of evil, and Firdausi writes of Sikander, 'all that remains … is an evil name.' Sikandar's invasion is referred to in the *Shahnameh* as a 'sea of blood' that brought only 'pain and misery,' and Sikander himself is described as a 'conquering renegade' who 'in recent times killed all the world's kings.' See Firdausi (Davis translation 2007): 463, 549.

Tanukh tribal chief and warrior, Imru'l-Qays, who became 'king of all the Arabs' according to the inscription (now in the Louvre) that marked his burial at Nemara in Syria. Al-Biruni also refers to a tradition that Dhu'l-qarnayn was the son of Bilqis, the name of the Queen of Sheba in Arabian tradition, although in the end he concludes that Dhu'l-Qarnayn is to be identified with one of the Yemeni princes of the pre-Islamic Himyarite dynasty.[41] An alternative suggestion is given by Mohamed Kiani, an Iranian archaeologist who investigated 'Alexander's Wall' in northern Iran, who interprets Qur'anic Dhu'l-qarnayn as referring to Cyrus and Darius.[42] In the Nusayri religion of Syria, the Qur'anic Alexander – *Iskandar dhu'l-qarnayn* – is one of the cyclical manifestations of deity that reveals himself in various forms in history.[43] In other words, a tribal claim of descent from Dhu'l-qarnayn does not necessarily mean Alexander, and in any case dates no further back than the Islamic conquest. Indeed, in dismissing the claims, Caroe himself emphasises that:

> 'the fact is that there is no local written record, Indian or Achaemenian, inscriptional or other, of Alexander's passage through the country; indeed there is no contemporary or even near-contemporary Asian reference to his Indian expedition at all. Were it not for Arrian and the other classical sources, Greek and Latin, the very memory of Alexander's connection with Gandhara would have faded like a dream. … the very existence of Alexander and his army had been long forgotten in those parts of Eastern Iran and India through which he passed. And so short was the time he spent upon the Frontier that little could have been left behind.'[44]

The creation of a 'British Alexander'

In other words, there is no firm evidence that such tribal claims of Alexandrine descent or otherwise association originated in tribal lore itself, but only in the *Alexander Romance* if that. Such fabricated descent seems more likely to have been suggested to the tribes themselves by the British because of

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[41] Al-Biruni *Chronology*: 48-9. See also Yarshater 1983: 472-3, Stoneman 2008: Chapter 2; Ball 2000: 97.

[42] Kiani 1982: 12-13.

[43] Bar-Asher 2003: 218; see fn 21 for bibliography of *Dhu'l-Qarnayn.*

[44] Caroe 1957: 44-45.

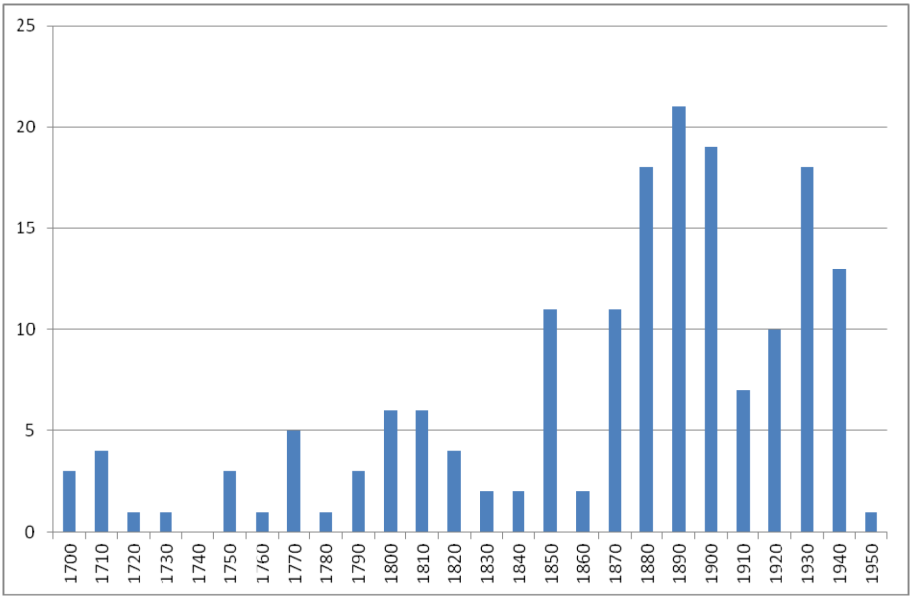

Table 1. British Library Catalogue Entries on search "Alexander the Great" (number of entries in each decade 1700-1950).

superficial 'European' resemblances and a British desire to walk in the great conqueror's shadow. They *wanted* to see Alexander, so they created one in their own image: a British Alexander; 'Each age makes its own Alexander.'[45]

The close association of Alexander with the advance of British India into the former areas of his conquests is demonstrated by a cursory look at the British Library Catalogue, which showed 173 single entries whose prime subject was Alexander the Great (or Alexander of Macedon) between 1700 and 1950. (1950 was chosen as a cut-off date, being the end of Empire after the independence of India and Pakistan). Significantly, there was a sharp increase of titles between 1850 and 1940, corresponding exactly to the high point of the Indian Empire (Table 1 and Appendix 2. Compare Appendix 1). The main increase was after the 1870s, rising to a peak in the 1890s, falling again in the 1910s and rising to another peak in the 1930s. It is possible to match this almost exactly with the British expansion into 'Alexander territory' in the North-West of India and related events in British imperial expansion: the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 following the Sikh Wars which brought Britain to the Hindu Kush; the Delhi Durbar of 1877 when the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, proclaimed Queen Victoria 'Caesar' of India; the 1880s and 1890s reflecting the main period of campaigning in the North-West Frontier when no less than eighteen campaigns were fought, such as the Hunza-Nagar Campaign of 1891, the Chitral Expedition of 1895, the Siege of Malakand and the Tirah Campaign of 1897, all campaigns into regions of purported Alexandrine descendants. The next high point in the 1930s reflect a re-awakened interest in the Frontier from new campaigns there – following a lull when greater attention was focussed on the First World War – when ten campaigns were fought between 1919 and 1939, including the Third Afghan War of 1919.

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[45] Stoneman 1991: 2.

The British Library Catalogue entries included two opera libretti, three plays and two poems all on the subject of Alexander. Significantly, there are no less than sixteen entries for Quintus Curtius' *History of Alexander*, with editions dated 1809, 1821, 1854, 1882, 1896, 1903, 1904 and 1935, matching the Frontier campaigns almost exactly. This is in contrast to just nine entries for Arrian – clearly reflecting the British reading public's preferences for which version of Alexander found greater favour. Interestingly, the period 1893 to 1896 also sees five entries for MacCrindle's *Invasion of India by Alexander the Great*.

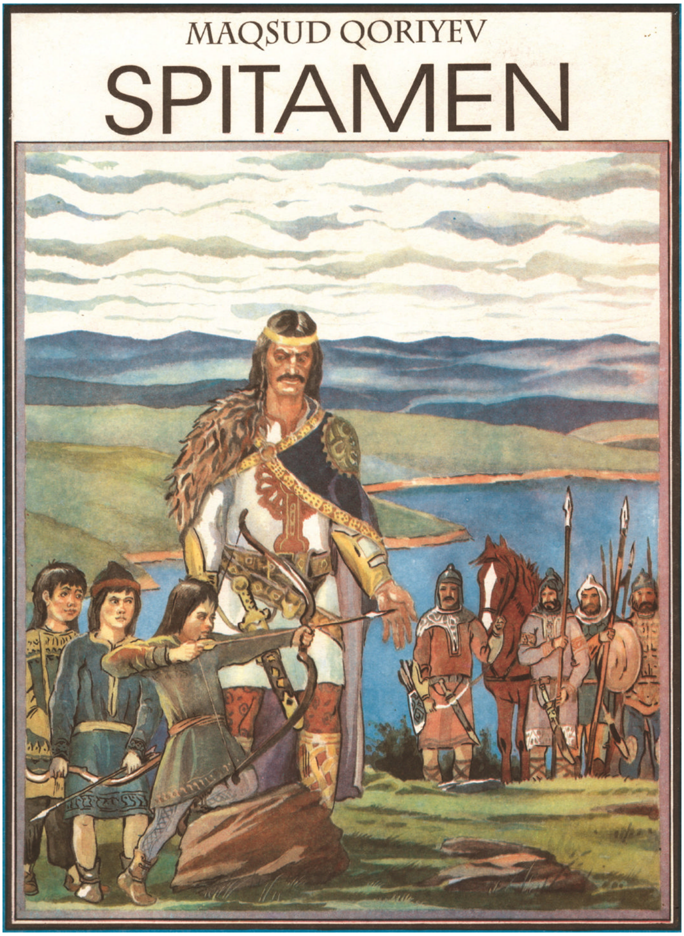

Plate 9. Cover of the Uzbek book, *Spitamen*.

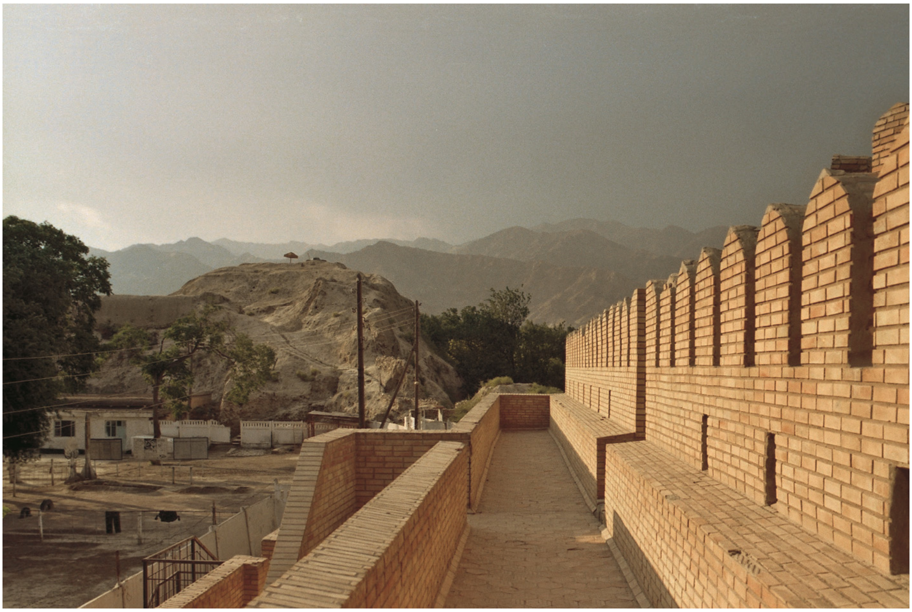

Plate 10. The citadel mound of Khojend, supposedly the site of Alexandria Eschate, on the left; the citadel walls on the right is entirely modern reconstruction.

Post-script at Alexandria Eschate

The uses and abuses of the Alexander myths to reflect the politics of the time shows no signs of abating. A contemporary Indian version of Alexander's invasion of India, for example, has interpreted this as a defeat for Alexander, not a victory.[46] This obsession with Alexander is demonstrated further when we turn to contemporary post-Soviet politics in Central Asia. On a visit to the upper Zarafshan Valley in Ferghana in Uzbekistan in 2004 – a valley where Alexander ordered a general massacre of the civilian population in 329 BC – the present author could not but help notice a popular Uzbek children's book for sale everywhere, *Spitamen* (Pl. 9). On enquiring of my Uzbek guide about this I was told very firmly that 'Spitamenes is the great hero around here, not Alexander.' On a subsequent visit to the Tajik side of Ferghana in 2007 I visited the citadel in the town of Khojend. Few places reflect better the whims of renaming after political figures. Khojend citadel has been identified with Achaemenid Cyropolis, named after Cyrus the Great, and renamed Alexandria Eschate – 'the furthest' – following Alexan-

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[46] Prakash 1994. See also Ball 2008: 59-60.

Хуш
омадед
ба ахд
ба номи
Т. Урчабоеви
нохияи
Спитамен

Plate 11. Entry to the former town of Nau near Khojend, now renamed Spitamen.

der's conquest (Pl. 10). It was renamed Leninabad during the Soviet period, reverting to Khojend after independence. And in 2003 the small town of Nau to the south-west of Cyropolis/Alexandria/ Leninabad/Khojend was renamed: Spitamen (Pl 11). From claims of descent to purported discoveries of his tomb, place re-namings, Hollywood epics and a never-ending stream of publications, the 'romancing' of Alexander continues in its various forms today.

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Appendix 1

Chronology of British expansion into the areas of Alexander's former Indian empire

1838–1842	First Afghan War
1843	Conquest of Sind
1845-6	First Sikh War
1848-9	Second Sikh War
1849	Annexation of Punjab
	Operations against the Baizai
1850	Operations in the Kohat Pass
1851–2	Mohmand Expeditions
1852	Ranizai Expedition
	First Black Mountain Expedition
1853	Shirani Expedition
1853	Afridi Expedition
1854	Aka Khel Expedition
1855	Operations against the Orakzais
1855–6	Miranzai Valley Expeditions
1857	Bozdar Expedition
1857-8	Expedition against the 'Hindustani Fanatics'
	Indian Mutiny
1859	Kabul Khel Expedition

1860	Mahsud Expedition
1863	Umbeyla Campaign
1863–4	Operations at Shabkadar
1868	Second Black Mountain Expedition
	Bazotee Expedition
1872	Operations in the Tochi Valley
1877–8	Jowaki Expedition
1878	Operations against the Utman Khel
1878–9	Zakka Khel Expeditions
	Operations against the Zaimukht
1878–80	Second Afghan War
	Operations against the Mohmands
1880	Operations against the Marris
1881	Mahsud-Waziri Expedition
1883	Expedition to the Takht-i-Suliman
1888	Third Black Mountain Expedition
1890–1	Operations in the Zhob Valley
1891	Fourth Black Mountain Expedition
	Miranzai Expeditions
	Hunza-Nagar Expedition
1894–5	Mahsud Expedition
1895	Chitral expedition
1897	Tochi Valley Expedition
	Siege of Malakand
	Operations of the Buner Field Force
	Tirah Campaign
1900–02	Mahsud Blockade
1908	Zakha Khel Expedition
	Mohmand Expedition
1914–15	Operations in the Tochi
1914–18	First World War
1915	Operations against the Mohmands, Buner and Swat
1915-16	Kalat Operations
1916–17	Mohmand Blockade
1917	Operations against the Mahsuds
1918	Operations against the Marri and Khetran tribes
1919	Punjab Rebellion, including the Amritsar Massacre
1919	Third Afghan War
1919–20	Operations in Waziristan
1921-24	Operations in Waziristan
1925	‘Pink's War’
1927	Operation against the Mohmands
1930–1	Afridi and ‘Red Shirt’ Rebellion
1933	Mohmand and Bajaur Operations
1935	Loe Agra Campaign
1935	Mohmand Campaign
1936–9	Operations in Waziristan

Appendix 2
Alexander Titles in British Library
(references contain hyperlinks)

Purcell, Daniel.	She walks as She dreams. Song. Sung by Mr Pate, in the Opera of Alexander the Great.	1701
Aristotle.	Aristotles's Secret of Secrets contracted; being the sum of his advice to Alexander the Great about the preservation of health	1702
LEE, Nathaniel.	The rival queens; or, The death of Alexander the Great ... The fifth edition.	1704
Racine, Jean,	Alexander the Great. A tragedy. Now first translated, etc.	1714
Racine, Jean,	Two Tragedies, viz. Brittanicus; and Alexander the Great. Now first translated into blank verse from the French of M. Racine, b	1714
	Is Innocence so void of Cares. Song, with the symphony in score, from the opera "Alexander the Great," words by N. Lee, music	1715
	Is Innocence so void of Cares. Song, with the symphony in score, from the opera "Alexander the Great," words by N. Lee, music	1715
CIBBER, Colley.	The Rival Queans. With the humours of Alexander the Great. A comical tragedy ... Written by Mr. Cibber. In verse. A burlesque	1729
LEE, Nathaniel.	The Rival Queens; or the Death of Alexander the Great, etc. With verses by Dryden addressed to Lee.	1735
Rollin, Charles,	The history and travels of Alexander the Great, etc.	1750
Alexander,	The History of the Life and Actions of Alexander the Great ... By Q. Curtius Rufus. Translated from the French of Monsieur de	1755
Lee, Nathaniel.	The rival queens; or, the death of Alexander the great: acted at the Theatre-Royal, by Her Majesty's Servants. By Nathaniel Lee	1757
FREDERICK AUGUSTUS, Prince of Brunswick-Oels main entry	Critical Reflections on the character and actions of Alexander the Great. Written originally in Italian, etc. Few MS. notes.	1767
LEE, Nathaniel.	Alexander the Great, a tragedy; with alterations, as it is now performed at the Theatres-Royal. In verse. By Nathaniel Lee.	1770
LEE, Nathaniel.	Alexander the Great, a tragedy; with alterations, as it is now performed at the Theatres-Royal. In verse. By Nathaniel Lee.	1772
PLUTARCH main entry	The history and travels of Alexander the great.	1775
LEE, Nathaniel.	The Rival Queens; or, Alexander the Great, etc.	1776
LEE, Nathaniel.	The Rival Queens; or, Alexander the Great, etc.	1779
LEE, Nathaniel.	The Rival Queens; or, Alexander the Great, etc.	1785
GUILHEM DE	A critical inquiry into the life of Alexander the Great by the an-	1793

CLERMONT-LODÈVE, Guillaume Emmanuel Joseph,	cient historians. From the French of the Baron de St. Croix, w	
Alexander,	Alexander the Great; or, the Conquest of Persia. A grand heroic pantomime, composed by Mr. J. D'Egville, etc. A scenario, by J	1795
LEE, Nathaniel.	The Rival Queens; or, Alexander the Great, etc.	1796
Alexander,	A Parallel between Alexander the Great and a Highwayman; shewing that the great victories of the one are no more to be justifi	1800
Alexander,	A Parallel between Alexander the Great and a Highwayman; shewing that the great victories of the one are no more to be justifie	1800
Alexander,	A Parallel between Alexander the Great and a Highwayman; shewing that the great victories of the one are no more to be justifi	1805
Curtius Rufus, Quintus.	The history of the life and reign of Alexander the Great /	1809
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	The History of the Life and Reign of Alexander the Great ... Translated by P. Pratt ... With supplements of J. Freinsheim,	1809
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	The History of the Life and Reign of Alexander the Great ... Translated by P. Pratt ... With supplements of J. Freinsheim,	1809
	When Alexander the Great asked Diogenes, the surly philosopher, who immured himself all day in a tub, what was the greatest fav	1810
ARRIANUS, Flavius.	Arrian's History of the Expedition of Alexander the Great ... Translated ... by Mr. Rooke and now corrected and enlarged ... Th	1813
ARRIANUS, Flavius.	Arrian's History of the Expedition of Alexander the Great ... Translated ... by Mr. Rooke and now corrected and enlarged ... Th	1813
Valerius, Julius.	Iulii Valerii Res Gestæ Alexandri Macedonis translatæ ex Æsopo Græco prodeunt nunc primum, edente notisque illustrante A. M	1817
AESOP, Biographer of Alexander the Great main entry	Julii Valerii res gestæ Alexandri Macedonis translatæ ex Æsopo Græco prodeunt nunc primum, edente notisque illustrante Ange	1817
Valerius, Julius.	Iulii Valerii Res Gestæ Alexandri Macedonis translatæ ex Æsopo Græco prodeunt nunc primum, edente notisque illustrante A. M	1817
Curtius Rufus, Quintus.	The history of Alexander the Great /	1821
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	The History of Alexander the Great ... Translated from the Latin. With original notes, critical and corroborative, including il	1821
Williams, John.	Life and actions of Alexander the Great /	1829
WILLIAMS, John,	The life and actions of Alexander the Great. Second edition.	1829
Bannatyne Club (EDINBURGH)	The buik of the most noble and vailzeand conquerour Alexander the Great. In verse. Edited by D. Laing.	1831

Dibdin, Thomas,	Alexander the Great! in Little. A grand tragi-comic operatic burlesque spectacle, in one act, etc. In verse.	1837
WILLIAMS, John,	The life and actions of Alexander the Great. Second edition.	1843
ABBOTT, Jacob.	History of Alexander the Great, etc.	1848
LEE, Nathaniel.	Alexander the Great, or, the Rival Queens, etc.	1850
ABBOTT, Jacob.	History of Alexander the Great, etc.	1850
ABBOTT, Jacob.	History of Alexander the Great, etc.	1853
,	The Life of Alexander the Great.	1853
Alexander,	Extracts from a Syriac Life of Alexander, with a translation.	1854
WOOLSEY, Theodore Dwight.	Notice of a Life of Alexander the Great translated from the Syriac i.e. from a Syriac version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes by .	1854
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	Quintus Curtius Rufus: Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great. The Latin text. Edited and illustrated with English notes, b	1854
PINCH, William.	The Sufferings of Royalty; or Human Greatness a Fallacy. Exemplified in the lives ... of ... Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar	1855
Alexander,	Life of Alexander the Great.	1856
Life main entry	Life of Julius Cæsar. Life of Alexander the Great.	1856
India.	India and the East India Company. A brief account of Hindoostan, from its invasion by Alexander the Great ... Together with the	1858
Williams, John.	The life and actions of Alexander the Great /	1860
Cust, Robert Needham,	Lives of Rama, Alexander the Great, Paul and Nanuk :	1862
PHILLIPS, John,	Concerning Music.-Concerning the fortune or virtue of Alexander the Great. Translated by J. Phillips.	1870
MEADE, Joseph,	Alexander the Great; a poem.	1871
LEE, Nathaniel.	Alexander the Great. A tragedy, in five acts.	1871
Birch, Samuel,	On a Hieroglyphic Tablet of Alexander, son of Alexander the Great, recently discovered at Cairo ... Extracted from the Transact	1871
PEARCE, Paulin Huggett.	Alexander the Great, a new play in three acts and in verse: and a Treatise on Swimming, etc.	1872
LEE, Nathaniel.	Alexander the Great.	1874
De Vere, Aubrey.	Alexander the Great :	1874
DE VERE, Aubrey Thomas.	Alexander the Great. A dramatic poem.	1874
MEADE, Joseph,	Alexander the Great; a poem.	1874
ARRIANUS, Flavius.	Alexander the Great in the Punjaub. From Arrian, Book V. With notes by the Rev. C. E. Moberly.	1875

MEADE, Joseph,	Alexander the Great; a poem.	1876
Obshchestvo Li͡uƀiteleĭ Drevneĭ Pis’mennosti (LENINGRAD)	Александрія. Being the life of Alexander the Great, King of Macedon.	1880
Niẓāmī Ganjavī,	The Sikandar nama e bara, or, Book of Alexander the Great /	1881
Niẓāmī Ganjavī, 1140 or 41-1202 or 3. main entry	The Sikandar Nāma, e Bara, or Book of Alexander the Great, ... translated for the first time out of the Persian into prose, w	1881
ABBOTT, Jacob.	History of Alexander the Great, etc.	1882
	The Life of Alexander the Great King of Macedonia.	1882
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	Quinti Curti Rufi Historiarum Alexandri Lib. VIII, 9-ix, 10. Literally translated with marginal headings, and a life of Alexand	1882
ARRIANUS, Flavius.	Alexander the Great in the Punjaub. From Arrian, Book V. With notes by the Rev. C. E. Moberly.	1884
Arrianus, Flavius.	The anabasis of Alexander or the history...conquests of Alexander the Great /	1884
Arrian.	The anabasis of Alexander, or, The history of the wars and conquests of Alexander the Great /	1884
BOUTFLOWER, Cecil Henry,	The Death of Alexander the Great. Newdigate Prize Poem, 1884.	1884
PLUTARCH main entry	The Lives of Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar and Pompey. Translated by J. and W. Langhorne.	1886
PLUTARCH main entry	Plutarch’s Lives of Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar. Translated by J. and W. Langhorne. (Written in phonography.).	1887
PLUTARCH main entry	Plutarch’s Lives of Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar. Translated by J. and W. Langhorne. (Written in phonography.)	1887
Alexander,	Alexandri Magni Regis Macedonum et Dindini Regis Bragmanorum de philosophia per literas facta collatio.	1888
Alexander,	Epistola Alexandri Macedonis ad Aristotelem ... de itinere suo et de situ Indiae.	1888
DODGE, Theodore Ayrault. FREDERICK II., called the Great, King of Prussia. Appendix. Miscellaneous	Great Captains. A course of six lectures showing the influence on the art of war of the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsa	1889
DODGE, Theodore Ayrault. FREDERICK II., called the Great, King of Prussia. Appendix.	Great Captains. A course of six lectures showing the influence on the art of war of the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsa	1889

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CHURCH, Alfred John.	A Young Macedonian in the Army of Alexander the Great ... [A tale.] With sixteen illustrations. [electronic resource]	1890
Church, Alfred John,	A Young Macedonian in the army of Alexander the Great /	1890
Church, Alfred John,	A Young Macedonian in the Army of Alexander the Great ... A tale. With sixteen illustrations.	1890
ARRIANUS, Flavius.	Arrian’s Anabasis. Bk. IV. Ch. 22-30. Bk. V. VI.	1893
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	History of Alexander the Great. A translation of bk. 8, chap. 9-bk. 9, chap. 10.	1893
M’Crindle, J. W.	The invasion of India by Alexander the Great /	1893
MACCRINDLE, John Watson.	The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great as described by Arrian, Q. Curtius, Diodoros, Plutarch and Justin. Being translati	1893
MACCRINDLE, John Watson.	The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great as described by Arrian, Q. Curtius, Diodoros, Plutarch and Justin. Being translati	1893
HERRMANN, Albert.	Untersuchungen über das Schottische Alexanderbuch, “The Buik of the most noble and vailzeand Conquerour Alexander the Great	1893
ARRIANUS, Flavius.	Arrian’s Anabasis. Bk. IV. Ch. 22-30. Bk. V. VI.	1896
Ibn al-Rāhib, Abū Shākir ibn Buṭrus,	The history of Alexander the Great.	1896
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	History of Alexander the Great. A translation of bk. 8, chap. 9-bk. 9, chap. 10.	1896
JOSEPH, ben Gorion main entry	The History of Alexander the Great, from the History of the Jews, by Joseph ben-Gorion. Translated from the Ethiopic.	1896
JIRJIS IBN AL-’AMĪD, called Al-Makīn main entry	The History of Alexander the Great, from the Universal History of Al-Makîn. Translated from the Ethiopic.	1896
M’Crindle, J. W.	The invasion of India, by Alexander the Great /	1896
MACCRINDLE, John Watson.	The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great as described by Arrian, Q. Curtius ... With an introduction ... by J. W. M’Crindle	1896
	The life and exploits of Alexander the Great :	1896
Budge, E. A. Wallis	The Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great :	1896
	The life and exploits of Alexander the Great :	1896
Hogarth, David George.	Philip and Alexander of Macedon :	1897
HOGARTH, David	Philip and Alexander of Macedon: two essays in biography ...	1897

George. PHILIP II., King of Macedon	With ... illustrations.	
Wheeler, Benjamin Ide.	Alexander The Great :	1900
Wheeler, Benjamin Ide.	Alexander the Great /	1900
WHEELER, Benjamin Ide.	Alexander the Great. The merging of East and West in universal history.	1900
Wheeler, B.	Alexander the Great /	1902
	Empire of Alexander the Great. Modulus, 1 : 12,000,000. (Empires of the Babylonians, Lydians, Medes and Persians. Modulus, 1 :	1903
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	History of Alexander the Great. Bk. 8, ch. 9-14. An interlinear translation. By J. H. Boardman.	1903
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	History of Alexander the Great. Book VIII, chapters IX-XIV. With introduction, notes, vocabulary, and test papers, by J. H. Boa	1903
Kirkman, Marshall M.	Iskander :	1903
KIRKMAN, Marshall Monroe.	Iskander. A romance of the Court of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great.	1903
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SMITH, Vincent Arthur.	The Early History of India from 600 B.C. to the Muhammadan Conquest, including the invasion of Alexander the Great. With illus	1904
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CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	History of Alexander the Great. Book IX., chapters I-V. With introduction, notes, vocabulary, and test papers. By Rev. J. Light	1904
Alexander,	A Japanese History of Alexander the Great.	1904
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	Quintus Curtius: History of Alexander the Great. Book IX., chapters VI. to end. A close interlinear translation. By Rev. J. Lig	1904
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	Quintus Curtius: History of Alexander the Great. Book IX., chapters VI. to end. With introduction, notes, vocabulary and test p	1904
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Smith, Vincent Arthur.	The early history of India, from 600 B.C. to the Muhammadan conquest, including the invasion of Alexander the Great /	1908
CARTOJAN,	Alexandria i.e. the romance of Alexander the Great în literatura	1910

Nicolae.	românească, etc.	
TANNER, James Gosset.	Four Notable Men: Oliver Cromwell, Erasmus, Alexander the Great, Cardinal Newman. Lectures.	1912
KIRKMAN, Marshall Monroe.	The Emperor. A romance of the camp and court of Alexander the Great. The love of Statira, the Persian queen ... Illustrated by	1913
KIRKMAN, Marshall Monroe.	History of Alexander the Great, his personality and deeds ... Illustrated by August Petrtyl.	1913
KIRKMAN, Marshall Monroe.	The King. A romance of the camp and court of Alexander the Great. The story of Theba, the Macedonian captive ... Illustrated by	1913
KIRKMAN, Marshall Monroe.	The Prince. A romance of the camp and court of Alexander the Great. The love-story of Roxana, the maid of Bactria ... Illustrat	1913
RUSSELL, Ada.	Alexander the Great ... Illustrated by A. Castaigne and William Matthews.	1914
Abrahams, Israel.	Campaigns in Palestine from Alexander the Great /	1927
ABRAHAMS, Israel,	Campaigns in Palestine from Alexander the Great. Edited by Stanley Cook.	1927
SCOTT, James George,	Alexander the Great ... With ... illustrations, etc.	1928
Robson, E. Iliff.	Alexander the Great :	1929
ROBSON, Edgar Iliff.	Alexander the Great. A biographical study.	1929
	Un Texto árabe occidental de la leyenda de Alejandro :	1929
Alexander,	The gests of King Alexander of Macedon :	1929
Alexander,	The Gests of King Alexander of Macedon. Two Middle-English alliterative fragments, Alexander A and Alexander B. Edited, with th	1929
Stein, Aurel,	On Alexander’s track to the Indus, personal narrative of explorations on the North-West frontier of India /	1929
Stein, Aurel,	On Alexander’s Track to the Indus. Personal narrative of explorations on the North-West Frontier of India, etc. With plates an	1929
Suhr, Elmer George.	Sculptured portraits of Greek statesmen :	1931
SUHR, Elmer George.	Sculptured Portraits of Greek Statesmen. With a special study of Alexander the Great.	1931
WILCKEN, Ulrich.	[Alexander der Grosse.] Alexander the Great ... Translated by G. C. Richards. [With a portrait and a map.]	1932
Wilcken, Ulrich.	Alexander the Great /	1932
Alexander,	Alexander the Great and the destruction of the ancient literature of the Parsees at his hands.	1932
WEIGALL, Arthur	Alexander the Great.	1933

Edward Pearse Brome.		
Weigall, Arthur.	Alexander the Great /	1933
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JIRJIS IBN AL-’AMĪD, called Al-Makīn main entry	Alexander the Great and Aristotle. (Translated from the Ethiopic translation of the Arabic text of the “Universal History”	1933
Tarn, W. W.	Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind /	1933
Tarn, W. W.	Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind ... From the Proceedings of the British Academy.	1933
JOSEPH, ben Gorion main entry	The Story of Alexander’s Visit to Jerusalem.	1933
JIRJIS IBN AL-’AMĪD, called Al-Makīn main entry	Alexander the Great and Aristotle. (Translated from the Ethiopic translation of the Arabic text of the “Universal History”	1933
Wright, Frederick Adam.	Alexander the Great /	1934
WRIGHT, Frederic Adam.	Alexander the Great. With plates, including portraits.	1934
MELDRUM, Roy.	Two Plays for Historians. (St Helena.-Alexander the Great.).	1934
Weigall, Arthur.	Alexander the Great /	1935
CURTIUS RUFUS, Quintus.	Alexander the Great, drawn mostly from Q. Curtius’ “Life of Alexander.” Edited by W. S. Hett. With illustrations, includin	1935
CUMMINGS, Lewis Vance.	Alexander the Great ... With maps.	1940
Lamb, Harold,	Alexander of Macedon :	1946
Mersey, Charles Clive Bigham,	Alexander of Macedon /	1946
BIGHAM, Charles Clive,	Alexander of Macedon. A poem. With a portrait.	1946
Lamb, Harold,	Alexander of Macedon the journey to World’s End /	1946
Burn, A. R.	Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic empire /	1947
BURN, Andrew Robert.	Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic Empire. With a portrait and maps.	1947
LAMB, Harold Albert.	Alexander of Macedon. The journey to world’s end.	1947
Weigall, Arthur Edward Pearse Brome.	Alexander the Great /	1947 1933
Tarn, W. W.	Alexander the Great /	1948

Tarn, W. W.	Alexander the Great /	1948
Tarn, W. W.	Alexander the Great, etc. With maps.	1948
Robinson, Charles Alexander,	Alexander the Great. The meeting of East and West in world government and brotherhood. With a portrait.	1949
Tarn, W. W.	Alexander the Great :	1950

Part 3

Texts

Alexander the Great in the *Shāhnāmeh* of Ferdowsī

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Although there are many works on Alexander the Great in Persian,[1] none of them is as close to the Syriac version and even to the Greek version of Pseudo-Callisthenes as the *Shāhnāmeh* of Ferdowsī. Although traditions about Iskandar in Persian literature were retraced on an Arabic source representing Pseudo-Callisthenes,[2] the story of Alexander in the *Shāhnāmeh* has some important characteristics which cannot come from an Arabic source but a Persian. It is obvious that the source of Ferdowsī had passed through an Arabic intermediary, for example because of the transformation of "p" to "f" in some proper names such as Philip to Fīlqūs or Porus to Fūr. Even though this source were in Arabic, as it is Christianized and not Islamized, this source must have belonged to an era in which still Islamic legends about Alexander had not been formed yet. The purpose of this paper is to examine these elements and to suggest that Ferdowsī ´s source on Iskandar was a pre-Islamic Persian source when the Alexander legends still had not been mixed with the Islamic legend concerning *Dhu'lqarnain*. I try to demonstrate that there are pieces of evidence which show that many accounts of Iskandar in the *Shāhnāmeh* had formed in Pre-Islamic Persian concepts.

Before starting to study the legend of Alexander in Ferdowsī ´s work, it is important to consider some details about Ferdowsī's sources, because it is impossible to understand the chapter on Iskandar without studying it in the context of the whole *Shāhnāmeh* and it is important not to study it as an individual part:

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[1] The versions that have survived in Persian can be divided into two groups: in meters *mathnavī* in poetry (Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, ed. Moscow, vol. VII-VIII. Nezāmī, *Iskandarnāmeh* (*Sharafnāmeh* and *Eghbālnāmeh*). Dehlavī, *Āīne-ye Iskandarī*. Jāmī, *Haft Orang*), and in prose: *Iskandarnāme-ye Manthūr*, anonymous; and Tarsūsī, *Dārābnāmeh*. There is also a popular Romance in Safavid period known as *Iskandarnāmeh of 7 volumes*. See: Ismael Sa´adat, *Dānesh-nāme-ye Zabān va Adab-e Fārsi*, vol. I, Tehran, 1384 (2005), pp. 402-410.

[2] Doufikar-Aerts, F., *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, Peeters, 2010, p. 13.

The Epic in Iran and Ferdowsī's sources

The most reliable information that we have about Ferdowsī and his sources is what he himself mentioned in *Shāhnāmeh*. He at the beginning of his work indicates that "there was a book from ancient times in which there were a lot of stories".[3] He continues that this book was dispersed (*parākande)* in the hand of *mūbads.* So one man who is mentioned as *Pahlavān dehqān nežād* (an Iranian noble)[4] compiled and gathered together all these stories about the kings and heroes of Iran in prose. And then he tells how Daqīqī started to compose the book in poetry but he was murdered by a slave so he himself continued Daqīqī´s work when a friend gave him this *Nāme-ye Pahlavī.*[5] In fact, he indicates in quite a number of passages that his poem is based on an "old book," that is to say, on one or more sources written in New Persian prose. Many scholars[6] agree that this ancient book refers to the *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr Ebn Abd al-Razzāq who was the feudal ruler of Tūs, traditionally held to be the birthplace of both Daqīqī and Ferdowsī. This book itself is based on different versions of an official chronicle relating the history of Iran, known by the standard designation of *Xwadāy-nāmag*[7] (Book of Kings), which was translated into Arabic according to the later sources which cite more than twenty Arabic translations of the epic.[8]

Christensen distinguishes between two traditions, a "religious" and a "national" one. The *Kīyānian* dynasty, in which Alexander is included as a Persian king, belongs to the national tradition. Macuch argues that the central position of the *pahlavāns,* "heroes" or "Parthians" in the original sense of the word in this chapter indicates that members of some important noble families who claimed descent from the Arsacid house, which makes them the Parthian *par excellence*, had created a version of the national history favorable towards themselves.[9] Tafazzolī also mentions that the chapter on the *Kīyānians* is based on Parthian sources.[10] Furthermore, if there was a version of "Book of Kings" favorable towards the Parthian, the chapter on Alexander would have been included in it.

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[3] Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, ed. Moscow, vol. I, p. 21.

[4] For the meaning of *Pahlavi* and *Pahlavān* in *Shāhnāmeh* see: Lazard, G., "Pahlavi/Pahlavâni dans le Šâhnâme," *Studia Iranica*, 1/1, 1972, pp. 25-41.

[5] *Shāhnāmeh, op. cit. supra,* pp. 22-23.

[6] See Safā (1369 S/1990), p. 179; Bahār (1374 S/1994), vol. I, pp. 235-6; Nöldeke (1930, reprinted 1979), p. 26; Rypka (1968), p. 152; Minorsky (1964), p. 261.

[7] See Barthold (1944); pp. 121-57; Christensen (1944), pp. 59-62; Mary Boyce (1968), pp. 57-9; Shahbazi (1990), pp. 208-29; Yarshater (1983), pp. 359-477; M. Macuch (2009), pp. 172-180.

[8] See Barthold (1944), p. 144ff.

What Ferdowsī himself stated about how this book was assembled implies that the material, on which the *Shāhnāmeh* is based, has been collected from more than one source[11] and more than one narrator or author; this explains some contradictions in the *Shāhnāmeh* especially in the case of the chapter on Alexander. Safā uses this chapter as an example of the faithfulness of Ferdowsī to his sources[12] but at the same time he argues that the chapter on Iskandar had a different source from the rest of the *Shāhnāmeh*, because in two cases, one in the chapter on Ardeshīr and another in Khosrow Parvīz′s response to the letter of Qeisar-e Rūm, Iskandar is mentioned with the adjectives that we can often see for him in Pahlavi literature, *gojastak* (cursed, hateful).[13] In the chapter on Ardeshīr, son of Bābāk, Iskandar is mentioned with the greatest Iranian enemies, Zahhāk and Afrāsiyāb. But this is not the only similarity between Zahhāk and Alexander, the account of the death of Mardās, Zahhāk′s father in the *Shāhnāmeh,* shows striking similarities to the death of Nectanebus in Pseudo-Callisthenes. In *Shāhnāmeh*, Zahhāk, with Satan′s help, led his father to a well into which Mardās fell, broke his back and died.[14]

I suggest that this is not due to the fact that Ferdowsī used a different source in writing this chapter, because this part is not an independent part in *Shāhnāmeh* but is part of the history of the *Kīyānian* dynasty normally identified as the Achaemenid dynasty; it is a part between the legendary and historic parts. The contradictions on Iskandar can be explained if we take into account that the original *Xwadāy-nāmag* itself probably had many authors or versions. Apart from this, on the one hand, the existence of common episodes on Alexander in authors of Persian origin like Tabarī and Dīnawarī and the fact that all these authors mention Iskandar as a Persian king of the *Kīyānian* dynasty shows that this chapter must have been included in the "Book of Persian kings". Neither the historians Tabarī, Dīnawarī and Esfahānī nor Ferdowsī develop the prophetic role of Alexander as *Dhu'l-*

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[9] See M. Macuch (2009), p. 176.

[10] Tafazzolī, A., (1376 H. S./1997), p. 271.

[11] Dick Davis (1992), p. 10.

[12] See Safā (1990), pp. 198-199.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] *Shāhnāmeh,* vol. I, pp. 45-46.

qarnain and it can be another evidence of their pre-Islamic sources. On the other hand the existence of books like *Dārābnāmeh* of Tarsūsī shows how the figure of Alexander was mixed with these legendary kings (Dārā and Dārāb) and demonstrates that there must have been a written source on Alexander in pre-Islamic Persian tradition.

The chapter on Iskandar (or Sekandar when the rhythm demands it in some verses) in the *Shāhnāmeh* contains 1261 verses. According to the words and references which appear in the story and the information that Ferdowsī himself gives us, I have divided it into three principal "layers": Persian, Christianized and Arabic, which show the historic transmission of the legend.

The Persian episodes

The *Shāhnāmeh* contains some episodes that exist neither in Greek nor in the Syriac version and I call them the Persian part. This part begins in the kingdom of Dārāb and concerns the battle between Fīlqūs (Philip) and the Persian king. It contains the Persian version on Alexander´s birth and it must have been the most ancient part of the legend on Alexander in pre-Islamic Iran. I would like to analyze the important words and some proper names in this part:

In Greek and Syriac Pseudo-Callisthenes the Persian king is Darius, but in the *Shāhnāmeh*, and also in Tabarī and Dīnawarī´s works, as in the Pahlavi texts he appears as Dārā son of Dārāb (in the Pahlavi texts he is mentioned as Dārā ī Dārāyān). Apart from this name, no trace has been left from the factual history of ancient western Iran. Dārā ī Dārāyān was pictured as the last sovereign of the *Kīyānian* dynasty. In the Iranian adaption of the Alexander Romance, Alexander is linked to this dynasty by making him the son of Dārā, bestowing on him the legitimacy of kingship.

The word Rūm appears in this chapter of the *Shāhnāmeh* with the name of Fīlqūs and Iskandar. In *Shāhnāmeh* as well as the Pahlavi texts,[15] Alexander is not Macedonian, not even Greek, but an inhabitant of Rūm or Arūm.
The other word is the name of the kingdom of Fīlqūs and Iskandar: Ammūriye[16]. At the time of Ferdowsī there were works on Alexander where

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[15] Pahlavi texts where appears Alexander are: *Ardāvīrāfnāme*, *Bondaheš, Kārnāme-ye Ardešīr-e Pāpakān, Nāme-ye Tansar*, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšah*r. In these texts Alexander is mentioned as Aleksander.

Macedonia was mentioned.[17] So, why in Ferdowsī´s source did Alexander come from this city in Asia Minor? The importance of Amorion in the Arabic sources is due to the conquest of this city by the Caliphate Mo'tasem according to the historian Mas'ūdī (Mas'ūdī IV, 358-59) in August 838 and the amount of Greek manuscripts that were acquired after the sacking of the city.[18] I suppose that this link is in relationship with Alexander´s mother, called Nāhīd,[19] which is the new Persian form of the name of the Iranian goddess Anāhitā (or Anāhīd). Although in Persian poetry the word "Nāhīd" normally refers to the planet Venus,[20] the symbol of beauty, in some cases, for example in Daqīqī´s and Ferdowsī´s poetry, it refers to the ancient meaning.[21] It seems that here it is a proper name and it does not have the astrological meaning because of the link with Amorion. The name Amorion is generally linked to the Proto-Indo-European *ma* 'mother', which leads to the conclusion that, at its foundation, the settlement was associated with the Mother Goddess cult, widespread in ancient Anatolia.[22] It is noticeable that an isolated inscription of great interest came to light near ancient Amorion, at Ghomme, which confirms the evidence of Iranian religion there.[23] As Mary Boyce states, the Amorion stele thus bears witness to the existence of a group of Zoroastrians, evidently prosperous, peacefully maintaining their ancestral customs in the interior of a Phrygia that had become strongly Hellenized during several generations of Roman rule.[24] The epithet "Mother" is unknown in the worship of Anāhīd, but is standard in that of Anatolian Cybele. In some inscriptions Anāhīd is also repeatedly named alone, with the cult title "Meter" which indicates that there was an assimilation of her concept to that of Cybele.[25] In the *Shāhnāmeh* once appears Ammūriye with the

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[16] Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VI, p. 375. The name of the city is mentioned four times in the reign of Dārāb, see p. 375 once and it is said that it is the reign of Fīlqūs, in p. 376 it is mentioned three times in the battle between Dārāb and Fīlqūs.

[17] For example Hunayn Ibn Ishāq, ed. Christy Bandak (2007).

[18] Gutas, D. (1998), p. 178.

[19] In *Shāhnāmeh*, Nāhīd is mentioned five times in the reign of Dārāb, ed. Moscow, pp. 377 (once), p. 378 (twice) and p. 380 (twice).

[20] In the Pahlavi books (some of which represent lost Avestan texts), the two are still sometimes treated as separate divinities, with Ardwīsūr as the personification of the mythical river, and Anāhīd, the fertility goddess, identified with the planet Venus, see Boyce, M. (1985a), pp.1003-5.

[21] For the examples see Yāhaqqī, M. J. (1369 S/1990), p. 417. And also see Sharīfī, (1387 S/2008), p. 1400.

[22] See Ivison, Eric A. (2007), Kazhdan, A. (1991), Lightfoot, Chris (2006).

[23] See M. Boyce and Frantz Grenet (1991), p. 261.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 261.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

word "mother" in the wedding of Alexander with Rowshanak, Dārā´s daughter:[26]

> "He called his mother form Ammūriye" ز عموریه مادرش را بخواند

Apart from this link, Anāhītā reappears in another Persian Alexander Romance two centuries later in Tarsūsī´s work *Dārābnāmeh*,[27] represented by Būrān Dokht, daughter of Dārā.[28] In *Dārābnāmeh* there are more relationships between Būrān Dokht and the goddess. In this popular Alexander Romance Būrān Dokht is associated with water. Anāhītā, as water-divinity, appears in *Yašt* 5 (known as the *Ābān Yašt*, q.v.) which is one of the longest and best preserved of the Avestan hymns.[29] These verses contain ancient epic material in brief where kings and heroes' names appear and in this respect, it is one of the most important parts of the *Avestā* where the legends of Ancient Iran, the base of the national epic are preserved.[30]

In the *Avestā* and the Middle Persian texts, there is not any direct mention to the "bad breath" but there are some words related to *Ahrīman*. One of these words is "bad smell" which appears in *Avestā* as gantay/gaintī.[31]

The herb that cures the bad breath of Alexander´s mother is mentioned in *Shāhnāmeh* as "*Eskandar*", and in Dīnawarī´s and Tabarī´s Persian variant it is *sandar*. The herb is, as likely as not, garlic.[32] More interestingly, the healing power of the herb may be indicated by the garlic, which was so esteemed by the Iranians as a medicine and a means of warding off the evil eye.[33] If we consider the "bad breath" as a sign of *Ahrīman*, the identification of the herb as garlic makes sense.

The only important thing that is due to the Greek version in this episode in the *Shāhnāmeh* is the birth of the horse in the same night that Alexander was born. Alexander´s horse is hardly known in the Arabic Alexander tradition, but Tabarī mentioned the horse called (A)būkefārasb,[34] ends to a Persian word "asb" (asp) which means Horse, so this name is composed by two parts: būkefār (Bucephalus) and asb "horse", which indicates a Persian source.

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[26] Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VII, p. 10.

[27] Tarsūsī, *Dārābnāmeh*, ed. Dhabiollāh Safā.

[28] See W. L. Hanaway (1982), pp. 285-295.

[29] Mary Boyce (1985b), p. 60.

[30] Safā (1369 H. S./1990), p. 35.

[31] Nyberg (2003), p.81.

[32] Stoneman, R (2008), p. 25.

[33] Shahbazi, A. Sh. (2002).

[34] *Annales*, 666 cited from Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p.208.

Besides Ferdowsī and Tabarī, this legendary mount is only found in Quzmān and some detail about their mutual birth days is also mentioned in Ethiopic Romance.[35] The explanation of the horse´s name in the *Shāhnāmeh* does not coincide with these Arabic sources. In the *Sīra* studied by Dr. Doufikar-Aerts[36] the horse is *bull´s heads*, like in Greek, the horse was called Bucephalus, because he had on his haunch a mark shaped like an ox´s head.[37] In the *Shāhnāmeh* the horse has a lion´s head and short legs.[38]

The historical information in this part is important, the poet places emphasis on the name of the cities and how long each battle takes.[39] It is noticeable how important is for the poet where each detail happens. For example Jahrom is where there is the key of the royal treasure,[40] the royal family is in Isfahan and Alexander is crowned in Estakhr (with a kīyānī crown). The poet´s emphasis on the name of the cities is very remarkable. There is not such an interest in the Greek or the Syriac version.

Another factor that shows the familiarity of the source with Persian rituals and traditions is in the funeral of Dārā where it is mentioned that Alexander prepared a *dakhme* (tower of silence, *dakhmag* in Middle Persian) for the Persian king. Using the word "*dakhme*" and other points about the Zoroastrian religion in the last words of Dārā might have belonged to a Persian version.

As we have seen above, Ferdowsī normally mentions the source with some specific words such as *daftar-e Pahlavī*, *mūbad*, *dehqān* or *gūyande-ye Pahlavi*. In the case of Alexander´s chapter, Ferdowsī mentions various times a "Pahlavi" source. Once, in the reign of Dārāb and another time in the episode of the Indian king Keyd. This episode starts with these words[41]:

چنین گفت گوینده ی پهلوی شگفت آیدت کاین سخن بشنوی

"Thus spoke the Pahlavi narrator, you will be astonished when you hear this story".

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[35] See Doufikar-Aerts, F. (2010), p. 208.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

[37] Stoneman, R., (1991), p. 47.

[38] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VI, p. 379.

[39] In general three battles take place, the first one in Euphrates River during eight days, the second in a vast camp during three days and after the victory he stays there four months; *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VI, pp. 385-399.

[40] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 392.

[41] *Shāhnāmeh,* vol VII, p. 12.

Although the poet appears to invoke oral informants, this can be shown to go back to his written sources; in other words, when the poet says that he has "heard" a story from such-and-such a person, he is merely repeating in verse what his source had already said in prose.[42] This episode is one of the most beautiful and complicated episodes on Iskandar, and is worth an independent study. The Indian Keyd also appears in the Pahlavi *Kārnāmak ī Ardashīr Pābakān*[43] as Indian Kēd. The word "Kēd" itself is a Pahlavi word which means "wise, magician"[44] as in Arabic sources he always appears as Indian philosopher or the wise Kand/Kayd/Qaydār/Qīdār.[45] Another interesting character in this episode in *Shāhnāmeh* is the man who interprets the Keyd´s dreams, Mihrān, who in *Kārnāmak* appears as Mihrāk[46] although there is not any common function in their character: the similarity is only in their names. But it shows that the story of Indian Keyd can probably come from the Iranian pre-Islamic sources.

The Christian references

The Christian references in the *Shāhnāmeh* are hardly made in accordance with typical Christian belief. Christian writings in Middle Persian consist largely of translation from Syriac.[47] As a native of Tūs, Ferdowsī must also have been in touch with the Christian community, which in his time had a street of its own *kūy-e tarsāyān* (Christian town or Christian street) in the town; nevertheless, his Christian references in the *Shāhnāmeh* generally echoed statements and sentiments that he found in his sources.[48] But the most interesting detail is that these Christian references appear normally in the episodes that have a Persian background, like the Persian version of Alexander´s birth or in the episode of Indian Keyd. There are some Christian writings in Middle Persian, regarded as a branch of Syriac literature.[49] By the end of the third century CE, Christianity was firmly established in parts of western Iran, and even in Sassanian rule individual Christians sometimes achieved high positions in the imperial administration.[50] After the independence of the Persian church form the Patriarch of Antioch, they called themselves Nestorians. The fifth century is seen as the beginnings of a Christian literature in Middle Persian. So it is not surprising that there are Christian elements in the Alexander chapter, as a result of the translation of the Romance from Syriac into Middle Persian.

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[42] François de Blois (1998).

[43] *La Geste d'Ardashir Fils de Pābag*, tr. du Pehlevi par Frantz Grenet, pp. 106-107.

[44] Wolff (1998), p. 678.

[45] See Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p. 87.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp.90-108-117.

[47] See Sims-Williams N., (2009), pp. 266-70.

[48] Qamar Āriān (1991).

[49] Sims-Williams, N., (2009), p. 266.

The Arabic background

There are many evidences that demonstrate that the Alexander chapter in the *Shāhnāmeh* had passed through an Arabic translation. In some verses Ferdowsī repeats exactly the statements and the words in Arabic which were in his source. For example in the battle between Dārā and Iskandar where Alexander´s army carry a flag in which is written these words: “lovers of the Cross” (*Moheb-e salīb*).[51]

همای از بر و خیزرانش قضیب نوشته بروبر محب صلیب

Also after the Fūr’s death starts some episodes that reflect a vast field of Arabic words and elements. Iskandar goes to *haram* (حرم), “the house of Abraham” where it is called *Bait-ol-harām* by God. There is nothing mentioned related to Islamic traditions; Iskandar goes to Mecca just to help Nasr Qotaib, the governor of Mecca who is the grandchild of Ismail and Abraham, to release the descendent of Ismail.[52] All these elements could have been in a Christian text too. On the other hand, it is very interesting to mention the information that Mas´ūdī gives in *Morūj* concerning the Sassanian kings and their respect for *Bait-ol-harām*. He affirms:” The ancient Persians, for respect to *Kaba* and to their ancestor, Abraham, went on a pilgrimage to *Bait-ol-harām*, and the last Persian king who went to *Kaba* was Sāsān son of Bābak, the ancestor of Ardashīr Bābakān, the first Sasanian king”.[53] He continues with some poems on how proud the Persians were of this issue.

Another problematic Arabic word appears in the episode of Queen Candace, which is read as Andalus (*Andolos* اندلس).

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[50] *Ibid*., p. 267.

[51] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VI, p. 384.

[52] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VII, pp. 41-43.

[53] Mas´ūdī, *Morūj*, ed. Dār al-hojra (Qom, Iran), vol. I, p. 103.

> “There was a queen in *Andolos* اندلس with a great wisdom and innumerous army, she was called Qaidāfe”[54]

So how can we explain the reference to Andalus if the text is not Islamized and had been formed in the pre-Islamic period? This episode is one of the most similar episodes to the Greek and Syriac versions in which there are many Christian references:[55] In Umāra´s text the episode of Queen Candace, called Qandefa there, is between the folios 60a-67a, and is situated between the meeting of Alexander with the Pharaoh and the Amazon episode.[56] We can find the episode of Qandefa in Aljamiado-Moorish version published by A.R. Nykl (1929), and also in the Ethiopian version made from an Arabic text. In the version edited by García Gómez (1929), *Un texto arabe occidental de la Leyenda de Alejandro*, it is between the episode of the trip to Egypt and Yemen and she is called “Candafa of Samora”, in the *Nihāya*’s manuscript Candace appears as Qandāfa “Queen of the west”.[57] Candace also appears in Quzmān’s manuscript.[58] In Arabic versions Queen Candace also returns in different guises as Ghaydāqa and Raydāqa.[59] But in none of these Arabic versions is Candace the queen of Andalus as appears in the *Shāhnāmeh*. If we take into account that Ferdowsī’s source was not Islamized and there are many Christian references in this chapter, the word “اندلس” cannot be read as “Andalus”. I suppose that this mistake comes from the problem that in Arabic alphabet, especially in Persian, the vowels do not appear. Another problem is that according to the rhyme and meter in poetry we have to read it as “*Andolos*” which can be translated as Andalus. But this meaning does not fit in the *Shāhnāmeh*, especially in the Alexander chapter, according to the background of its sources. I suggest that the original word must be a city in Asia Minor which was considered as the “west” for the Persians. The Christian references appear in Alexander’s conversation with Qaidāfe when he swears not to send his army to her kingdom.[60]

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[54] *Ibid.*

[55] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol VII, p. 59.

[56] Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p. 42, note. 118.

[57] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 31.

[58] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 85, note. 282.

[59] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 248.

[60] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VII, p. 59.

> "I swear by the Messiah's religion, by his just commands, by the grand Cross, I swear in the name of *zonnār*[61] (girdle), *shammās* (deacon) and Holy Spirit".

In the episode of the search for the Water of Life, Ferdowsī mentions again his source as: *dehqān* and *Pahlavān.*[62] In another case he repeats: "In the dark night he was remembering the Almighty, and then he thought of another water, which the *dehqān* called Water of Life".

The continuous episodes are similar to the Syriac version and in some cases to the Greek version. In his way to Babylon, another time appear references to some important figures of *Kīyānian´s* chapter, Iskandar passes through an island in which there are images of Afrāsīyāb and Kay Khosrow, painted on bones. It is an island where the only food is fish. The people give Iskandar the Key of Khosrow´s treasure.[63]

Although at the beginning of the chapter, the construction of Alexandria is not mentioned, at the end of the episode, Alexandria is mentioned in relation to the city where Alexander is buried.[64] The figure of Aristotle (Aristātālīs or Aristālīs) in the *Shāhnāmeh* is not very distinguished; he is only mentioned at the beginning of the kingdom of Alexander and at the end relating to Alexander´s funeral.[65] After Alexander´s death, it is said that "a Christian priest" washed his body and prepared him for the funeral.[66] At the end Ferdowsī says that Iskandar killed 36 kings and built ten cities.[67] He is happy to have passed through "Alexander´s wall" (*sadd-e Eskandarī*).

Conclusion

The study of the Alexander legend in the *Shāhnāmeh* is very complicated not only because of the contradictory figure of Alexander in the Persian tradition, but also because of the variety of the sources of *Shāhnāmeh* and different versions of *Xwadāy-nāmag* itself. But basing on different "layers" that I have examined above, taking into account the sources of *Shāhnāmeh* on the one hand, and on the other hand, the account on Alexander in the Arabic sources of a Persian author, like Tabarī and Dīnawarī who like Ferdowsī included Alexander in the *Kīyānian* dynasty, I suggest that the Alexander chapter, especially Alexander´s birth and the episode of the Indian Keyd, was included in *Xwadāy-nāmag*, translated from Syriac into Middle Persian in the last Sassanian period. Faustina Doufikar-Aerts suggests the probability that more than one Arabic translation from the Syriac was in circulation.[68] I suppose that it is due to this reason that there was a Persianized version in Middle Persian, derived from Syriac which was translated into Arabic in the Islamic period, most probably in the Abbāsid period[69], and it turned into an important source especially for the Persian authors although they wrote in Arabic, even the author of *Nihāya* used this Arabic translation of *Xwadāy-nāmag*. This is the reason why this text is similar to Dīnawarī´s and Ferdowsī´s versions, and also why Ibn al-Muqaffa is mentioned in the text[70], who appears in the sources as the translator of *Xwadāy-nāmag.*[71]

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[61] A cord worn around the neck with a pendant cross, worn by Christians. ʻA.-A. Dehkhodā, (1358 H. S./1979).

[62] *Shāhnāmeh,* vol.,VII, p. 80.

[63] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 100.

[64] *Op. cit. supra*, pp. 107-8.

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 106.

[67] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 111.

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[68] Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p. 281.

[69] Gutas shows that the function of *bayt al-hikma* in the early Abbāsid was to transcribe and preserve books on *Iranian* national history, warfare and romances. See Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, London and New York, 1998, pp. 54-5.

[70] The Alexander passage in the *Nihāya* was handed down by the author of Pseudo-Asmayī in the name of the famous translator Ibn al-Muqaffa. F. Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p. 30.

[71] On the Pahlavi texts translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa see Dodge (1970), p. 260.

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The King Explorer:
A Cosmographic Approach to the Persian Alexander

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1. De Mundo

Several manuscripts scattered in various libraries contain a still unpublished Persian geographical account, probably the work of an author from Kerman, composed in the middle of the 14th century. In this *Kitāb suwār al-aqālim*, “Book on the figures of the climates” – which has nothing in common with the more famous work of the same name by al-Balkhī (d. 934) – the anonymous author states that he had found in the prince's library an outline of the inhabited quarter of the globe. He states that he had written the present work as an explanatory text, interspersed with curious information and suitable narratives. According to the author, the geographical text he was commenting on had been requested by the sixteen-year-old Alexander, who asked Plato to provide him with a guide book to help him embark on the conquest of the world. It included maps and demographic information, and it was transmitted to Alexander by Plato’s disciple, Aristotle, in the year 770 before the Hijrah.[1] This Persian work might be connected to the very complex question of the transmission to the Islamic world of the renown pseudo-aristotelian text *De Mundo*. This text was extremely popular: probably the

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[1] See for instance mss. Ancien Fonds 116 and Supplement Persan 364 and 1139, in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France; and mss. Add. 7704, Add. 23,545, Or. 1586 in London, British Library: Blochet 1905-1934, I, 385-386, nn. 664-666; Rieu 1879-1883, I, 420-421. Other manuscripts are pointed out by Storey in his bio-bibliographical survey of Persian Literature (vol. II, part 1, 131-132). In this paper I have transcribed Arabic and Persian names and words in a slightly different way, according to the common scholarly usage for each language (thus Alexander becomes Iskandar/Eskandar when referring to Arabic/Persian texts). However, Alexander’s Islamic epithet Ḏū’l-Qarnayn has been left in its Arabic form also when referring to Persian sources.

The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East, 175–203

work of syncretic milieus of the late Hellenistic period (1st century CE), it was transmitted in Arabic in at least three different revised recensions.[2] A close comparison between the Arabic text and our *Kitāb suwār al-aqālim* might confirm or alter our hypothesis. Even so, this brings to our attention a recurring feature of the Persian tradition's treatment of the Alexander legend: the shift in the attribution of authority on cosmographical issues from Aristotle to Plato.[3] This point is borne out in another Persian text, the semi-popular *Dārābnāme* ("Book of Darius") by Ṭarsūsī (12th century), in which Alexander spends the first half of his adventures in search of Plato: in this account it is Aristotle himself who insists that Plato is the only one with the requisite knowledge to lead the young king to the periplus of the world. He advises: «it is not possible to explore the world without Plato, because he is the one who knows what is and what is not in the world».[4]

These apparently incidental observations provide an important starting point for our inquiry: Alexander has been depicted by a long and rich literary tradition as the 'king explorer', whose power and political projects were based above all on a detailed geographical and cosmographical knowledge. Alexander's court in Persian romances is usually brimming with renowned scientists, technicians and philosophers from the Classical world, representing an anachronistic but coherent *summa* of ancient Eurasian wisdom. Such representations are the result of an idealization process which, from its Greek foundations through to later Hellenistic and Judaeo-Christian interpretations, identified Alexander as the perfect synthesis of power and knowledge, of dominion and science.[5] In this article, the attribution of Alexander as 'king explorer' will be investigated with a particular focus on the Persian literary tradition.

At the beginning of another Persian work, the *Šarafnāme*, "Book of Honour", the first volume of the *Eskandarnāme*, "Book of Alexander", by Neẓāmī-e Ganjevī (1200 ca.), Alexander is called the *Šāh-e āfāq-gerd*, the

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[2] See Stern 1964, Grignaschi 1966, Brafman 1985; an updated review of the question, from the point of view of the Syriac version, is in McCollum 2011.

[3] This can be explained partly as a natural effect of the mediating role played by the Neoplatonic schools in transmitting a significant portion of Greek philosophy and science into the Islamic environment, especially with regard to magical, astrological, and alchemical topics, as well as cosmographical subjects more broadly. See Walzer 1986a.

[4] Ṭarsūsī 1965, II, 283; on this romance see also Piemontese 2000 and Gaillard 2005. An updated overview of Alexander literature in most traditions of Europe and Asia through the Middle Ages is Zuwiyya 2011.

[5] For a survey of these sages in the main Persian Alexander romances, see Casari 2010.

'horizon-wandering king'.[6] The stories about him, which were often included in courtly books, 'mirrors for princes', were of interest to both powerful and minor sovereigns for their mixture of political advice and cosmographical information that could inspire or even support their ambitions of expansion. Neẓāmī explains this very clearly in his dedication to the Seljuk prince of Mosul, ʿIzz al-dīn Masʿūd ibn Arslān, at the end of the *Eqbālnāme,* "Book of Fortune", the second volume of his *Eskandarnāme*:

> In that harmonious symposium nothing else than this book has its place:
> For gazing through it at the world, and drawing the maps of mountains and seas,
> And now riding up to Terāz, now raiding Ethiopia's land.
> Thus the world offered to the one who longs for world dominion, sitting still, the rule of its own horizons.
> For him this blandishing book has opened the door of the seven countries, as a sign of victory.
> And with this book the king's assembly has become joyful, full with visions from the world's circle.
> Bless you, o heir of Key Khosrow's symposiums, your arm is the strength of the state,
> Then look into this world-showing cup, and find what you ask from the world's God.[7]

This passage suggests that Alexander-books might be comparable to maps, like those artistically drawn in ancient and medieval times, so often filled with figurative representations of the most famous of Alexander's exploits.[8] These maps traced boundaries, of course, and named cities, but they also described territorial asperities, peoples' bizarre characters, natural wonders, and dreadful monsters, with the constant substratum of narrative allusions. In such a context, every *Alexander romance* could be the occasion for a cosmographical survey of the world. If Alexander had explored the whole world, a book on his exploits could be a new map of it, at times updated with new information by the most erudite authors, and at other times merely reproducing the main established narratives, through the authoritativeness of literary transmission.

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[6] Neẓāmī-e Ganjevī 1368Š/1989, 107.

[7] Neẓāmī-e Ganjevī 1370Š/1991, 1528.

[8] On Alexander in the very rich Hereford map, see Kline 2006. I would like to thank Faustina Doufikar-Aerts for drawing my attention to a much later, still very interesting map, drawn in India in the 18th century with Persian writings on it, which represents Alexander's legendary exploits; it is at present in the Staatliche Museum Preussischer Kulturbesitz, in Berlin. Unfortunately, I have not been able to study it in depth for the purposes of this paper.

Philological inquiry conducted along comparative lines can help us to trace these strands that appear in the course of Alexander narratives: fragments of geographical, ethnographical, political, and technological knowledge. At times these fragments reveal themselves as lively sprouts of knowledge, which remained recognized and utilised by authors throughout the subsequent stages of their literary interpretation. Conversely, other fragments might be dormant 'fossils' that were unconsciously absorbed in the relentless process of the recasting of the saga. With these preliminary observations in mind, the essay is structured around four distinct themes, with reference to a number of key texts from the vast literary tradition related to Alexander.

2. Geographical recognition – The Northern regions

In taking up the cosmographic thread that we are following, an episode that warrants our attention is Alexander's famous journey to the Land of Darkness in search of the Water of Life, a story which is included in plenty of versions of the Alexander saga. While I have presented elsewhere in more detail my findings concerning the complex philological process that allows us to reconstruct a coherent reading of the journey, a few points should be made here.[9]

It is possible to reconstruct this episode as constituting a collection of ancient and progressively updated themes concerning the exploration of the Northern lands and seas of Eurasia. In the literary evolution of the narrative, an initial historical benchmark is set with Alexander's interest in the question of whether or not the Caspian Sea was a gulf of the Northern Ocean (as related by Arrianus, *Anabasis*, VII, 16, 2). Already some of Alexander's historians had consciously transferred part of his oriental exploits in the North in order to complete the myth of the *Kosmokrátor*. Strabo had denounced this operation (*Geography*, XI, 7, 4). The corpus of information on this geographical issue grows richer with the addition of news related to the first actual known Northern expeditions, such as the Greek one led by Pytheas of Massalia, probably a contemporary of Alexander, or those promoted by the Roman emperors, like the 1st century expedition of Drusus

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[9] See Casari 2005, 2006, 2011.

Germanicus, Augustus' stepson, reported by Tacitus.[10] But the narrative on Alexander's Northern exploration takes its most complete shape in the Islamic tradition, after a number of reports on the northern course of the Volga provide further updated information on the region, like that of the caliph's ambassador Ibn Faḍlān (10th century).[11]

A scant, yet meaningful, geographical indication, is given in the so-called *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, ancestor to the myriad subsequent versions of the *Alexander Romance*. In this text, Alexander's expedition is marked by the direction *katá tén ʻámaxan toú pólou* («along the Polar constellation», PC, II 32), which is repeated as he and his companions emerge from the Darkness (*katá tén ʻámaxan tón astéron*, PC, II 40). That land at «the end of the world» is in a region «where the sun never shines» (PC, II, 39).[12] While the presence of the same episode in the Syriac tradition allows for a comparison with this one,[13] a much more explicit allusion is provided by the later Islamic texts. The Arabic historian Ṭabarī (10th century) reports that Alexander, after the conquest of India, China and Tibet, «penetrated into the Darkness, located beside the North Pole and the southern sun (*al-šams al-junūbiyya*), together with four hundred men, looking for the Fountain of Eternity, and he spent eighteen days there».[14] The same reference is repeated in a number of other Arabic and Persian texts, including Neẓāmī. Here, after having freed queen Nūšābe from the Rūs, Alexander is resting in his camp in the lands north of the Caucasus. During a banquet, Alexander is informed by an old man of the existence of the Fountain of Life, behind «a veil whose name is Darkness», «under the North Pole». And he adds that «from us to that land the way is short».[15]

Climatic and ethnographic details in these accounts can be compared with the classical tradition relating to the Northern regions, mainly based on Pytheas' account, or the reports about later Roman enterprises. One notion clarified in these accounts was that the darkness of those regions was not due only to the long winter nights, but also to the dense fog coming out of melting ice, beginning in the spring, when the sun began to stay over the horizon. This information circulated very effectively through the Arabic and Persian “Stories of the Prophets” (*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’*), according to the Arabic transcription), in the sections dealing with Iskandar-Ḏū’l-Qarnayn, the ‘Two-Horned’ Alexander, as he is often called in the Islamic tradition.[16] We can see, for instance, the chapter devoted to Ḏū’l-Qarnayn in a particular Persian collection of *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’*, a manuscript of which is preserved in the British Library. Informed of the existence of the Fountain of Life, Ḏū’l-Qarnayn moves towards the Darkness, described thus: «This was a region of rising vapours. It was not a nightly darkness, but like that of vapour coming out from a well».[17] [See fig. 1] This can be compared with Plinius’ affirmation, based on Pytheas’ account, that the Northern region is a *pars mundi damnata a rerum natura et densa mersa caligine* (*Natural History*, IV, XII, 88).[18]

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[10] For the first, see Roseman 1994, Bianchetti 1998; for the second, Chevallier 1984.

[11] See Canard 1958; see also Markwart 1924.

[12] The episode appears in the β version and its derivatives; the more detailed form is in the γ version, on which see Engelmann 1963, 306-315. A summary is in Merkelbach 1977, 134-135, 137-138. Although we may doubt that the Greek variant of the episode constitutes the original version, it still represents a fundamental step in its development and transmission.

[13] A focused contribution is in Reinink 1990; see also Casari 2006.

[14] Ṭabarī 1881-1882, 701.

[15] Neẓāmī-e Ganje'ī 1368Š/1989, 509-510.

In his account of the region of the northern Tartars, Marco Polo observed that it is «quite impassable for horses, for it abounds greatly in lakes and springs, and hence there is so much ice as well as mud and mire, that horses cannot travel over it». According to Polo, this land can be crossed with sledges drawn by big dogs. «Still further north», he continues, «[...] there is a region which bears the name of Darkness [‘Iscurità’], because neither sun, nor moon nor stars appear, but it is always as dark as with us in the twilight».[19] One of the oldest Arabic sources connected with Alexander, the Yemenite *Kitāb al-Tījān*, “Book of Crowns”, by Ibn Hišām (d. 833), provides us with further interesting details: «[Ḏū’l-Qarnayn] entered the Darkness until he reached a land which was as white as the snow, where no plants could germinate. There was a light different from that of the sun: a white

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[16] The *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿanbiyā’* constitute a diffuse literary genre which hasn’t been given proper attention so far. For this reason most of the texts are still unpublished. A general overview on Alexander in Arabic literature, including a discussion of the Ḏū’l-Qarnayn tradition is in Doufikar-Aerts 2010.

[17] *Majles sī-dovvom dar ẕekr-e Ḏū’l-Qarnayn*, in *Qeṣaṣ al-anbiyā’*: ms. I. O. 2028 British Library in London, ff. 170r-176r: 174v. In Arabic, an authorial version of the same notion is expressed by al-Ṯaʿalabī, in his “Spouses for the Assemblies”, for which see al-Ṯaʿalabī 1956, 495.

[18] The gloss is more complete in Solinus, *Collectanea rerum mirabilium*, XV: «damnata pars mundi et a rerum natura in nubem aeternae caliginis mersa ipsisque prorsus aquilonis conceptaculis rigentissima».

[19] See Yule 1921, 479-486.

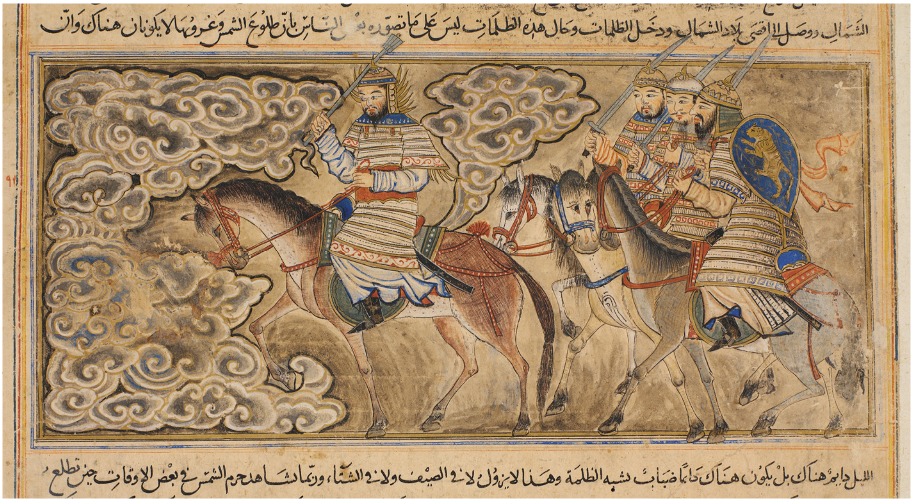

Fig. 1. Alexander enters the Land of Darkness. Miniature from Rašīd al-dīn, *Jāme' al-tawārīkh* ("Compendium of Chronicles"), 1306-07. Edinburgh, University Library, ms. Arab 20, f. 19r.

light that nearly tore up one's sight. He would walk on that land, but the beasts sank in it up to their chests».[20]

This mosaic-like reconstruction of the Northern landscape gradually brings the region more fully into view; at the same time, a number of ethnographic features of these inhospitable regions completed the picture. While we do not know precisely by which literary route this was achieved, the account given by the Persian poet Ferdowsī of Alexander's meeting with a Northern people right on the border of the Land of Darkness undoubtedly is closely connected to classical reports about Pytheas' journey as well as later Roman expeditions. In the section devoted to Alexander in his *Šāhnāme*, "Book of the Kings" (completed 1010 ca.), Ferdowsī observes: «In his path there appeared a great city, inhabited by men of enormous size». He continues:[21]

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[20] Lidzbarski 1893, 303. Actually, in this text Ḏū'l-Qarnayn is identified with an ancient himyarite king, Ṣaʿb ibn Ḏī Marāṯid. Although the topic is still discussed, the connection between Alexander's stories and a great part of the material in this work can be assumed as a fact. For a general survey of the text, see Nagel 1978, and Doufikar-Aerts 2010, *passim*.

[21] The whole episode in Ferdowsī 1984, 107-111.

All had red hair and pale faces and all were ready for war in time of conflict.
They presented themselves before him at his command, but like mad men they beat themselves on the head.
Eskandar asked those proud men whether one of them could point out any marvels to him.
An old man replied: ‘Oh king of auspicious star, conqueror of many towns,
On the further side of this land there is a basin, whose water is unequalled anywhere else.
And when the shining sun goes down there, it disappears into that deep sea.
Behind that water source the world becomes dark, and the known things of the earth become hidden.

While the physical description of that people (first verse) is a perfect translation of Tacitus’ description of the Germans inhabiting the Northern coasts of Europe (*Truces et caerulei oculi, rutilae comae, magna corpora et tantum ad impetum valida*, «Pale blue and stern eyes; ruddy hair; large bodies, powerful in sudden assaults», *Germany*, IV, 2), the location corresponds to the place reached by Pytheas on his journey northwards, according to Cosmas Indicopleustes: «in his work concerning the ocean, [Pytheas] informs us that when he had reached the remotest parts of the north, the barbarous people he found there showed him the cradle of the sun, for, where they live, that was the place where the sun used to spend the night» (*Christian Topography*, II, 80).

Thus, a simple wish expressed by the historical Alexander – already celebrated by his earliest chroniclers who considered the exploration and conquest of the North the necessary seal to his universal dominion – becomes in the course of its literary journey the catalyst for providing ever more updated information about those traditionally unknown regions. Following this cosmographical reading of the whole episode, we may begin to offer a more concrete interpretation of some glosses found in Arabic and Persian accounts of Ḏū’l-Qarnayn. With reference to the Fountain of Life, these accounts commonly state that «the water of that Fountain is whiter than milk, colder than ice, sweeter than honey».[22] If we consider geographical descriptions of the Arctic landscape, we find that it is identified by the presence of the ice-pack: usually solid during the winter (*mare concretum*, according to Plinius, *Natural History*, IV, 104), it partly melts in the summer, when many little pools of 'sweet'[23] freshwater appear on its surface. The melting of small and big glaciers gives rise to numerous springs and fountains, which often emerge from cracks produced in the rocks. In the regions situated slightly south of the Polar Circle, this phenomenon may endure all through the year. This trickling water is precious, sweet, cold as melting ice, and of white colour, like milk, and reminiscent of our literary Fountain of Life.[24] Of course, different threads can be woven to interpret such dense and ancient stories involving Alexander, the king explorer.[25] Yet, if we are to consider these glosses as literary fossils of ancient accounts relating these arduous Northern explorations, then, for the voyagers and sailors travelling in the salted sea or through muddy lands, the Water of Life may well have represented survival rather than immortality, while the literary evolution of the mythical Fountain may include echoes of this geographical knowledge.

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[22] The gloss fluctuates in length. A Persian example is in al-Nīsābūrī 1340Š/1961, 330; an Arabic one is in al-Ṯaʿalabī 1956, 496.

3. Geopolitical updating – India

Following our tireless explorer Alexander to India on the other side of the world, we are presented with further surprises. In Ferdowsī's *Šāhnāme*, Alexander has an important meeting with the Indian king Keyd. The meeting is described in a number of other Arabic and Persian versions as well: for instance, in al-Mas'ūdī's general history *Murūj al-ḏahab* ("The Golden Meadows", 10th century), where the king is given the name of Kand; in the *Mujmal al-tawāriḫ wa-'l-qiṣaṣ* ("Collection of chronicles and stories", 1126), where he is called Qefend, and in Tarsūsī's *Dārābnāme* (12th century), already mentioned, where he bears the name Keydāvar.[26] In the *Šāhnāme*, Keyd is identified as the king of Qanawj (Kannauj, currently in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh), another region that the historical Alexander did not actually reach. Kannauj was an important city from the 7th century on, but it declined after two consecutive sacks, the first in the 11th century by

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[23] With this adjective freshwater is qualified in many languages, including Arabic and Persian.

[24] On the Arctic climate, see Brümmer 1985.

[25] A general overview of the themes connected with Alexander's search for the fountain of life is in Stoneman 2008, 150-169, with related bibliography, including the classic work by Friedländer 1913. See also Stoneman 1992.

[26] See Casari 2010.

Maḥmūd of Ghazna and the second in the 12th century by the Ghurids. In Ferdowsī's narrative, the wise, well-mannered and moderate king Keyd is advised in a series of dreams interpreted by the sage Mehrān to avoid a battle with Alexander. [See fig. 2] He becomes the young king's ally instead by offering him four precious gifts: his beautiful daughter, a wise philosopher, a peerless physician, and a wondrous cup that, once filled with wine or fresh water, never runs dry.[27]

This episode does not appear in the Greek tradition of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, and its origin is unknown, although Ferdowsī states that his account is drawn from a pahlavi source. Nevertheless, a comparison with the Greek historiographical tradition would suggest that the role played by Keyd – counterpart of the other Indian king Fūr, Porus (Greek Póros, Sanskr. Puru), with whom Alexander fights in Ferdowsī's narrative – corresponds perfectly to the role of king Ambhi (Ómphis or Táxiles in the Greek and Latin sources), sovereign of the town of Taxila (Sanskr. Takşaśila). According to the historical sources, Táxiles made an alliance with Alexander and helped him against Porus. Furthermore, and similar to the literary accounts of king Keyd, Plutarch describes Táxiles as a very wise man that persuaded the Macedonian king with a clever speech and a rich exchange of gifts. Moreover, it is Táxiles who has the Indian sage Calanus conveyed to Alexander: just like the anonymous philosopher envoyed to Alexander by Keyd, the envoy Calanus presents himself to his new king with mute learned gestures (Plutarch, *Alexander*, LIX e LXV).

But the Keyd episode has a still more articulated structure. A further stage in its interpretation comes again from Greek sources. According to Philostratus, biographer of Apollonius of Tyana, the famous 1st century sage arrived in Taxila travelling along Alexander's routes. There, he met the wise and moderate king Phraotes («the man who was ruling the kingdom of Porus at that time»), with whom he conversed at length on the interpretation of dreams, the nature of the world and correct medical conduct, in particular the relative merits of drinking water or wine. After three days the king provides Apollonius with additional directions for his journey and advice for meeting other wise men along the way (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, II, 20-41). It is worth recalling here that Apollonius of Tyana later becomes the Bālīnās of the Arabic-Persian tradition: companion, guide and technical advisor to King Iskandar.[28]

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[27] Ferdowsī 1984, 57-71.

[28] See Plessner 1986.

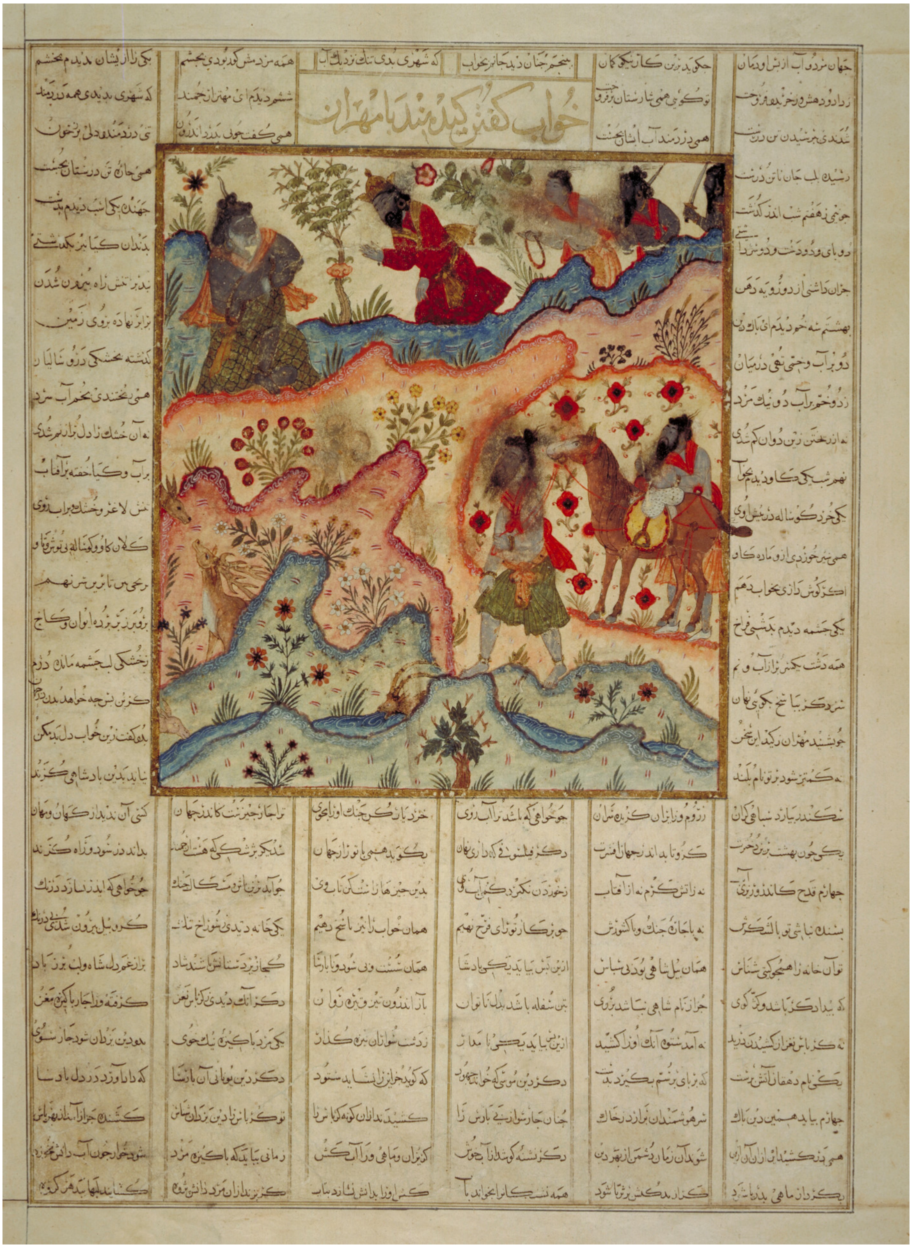
خواب کفتن کید هند با مهران

Fig. 2. The sage Mihran interprets Keyd's Dream. Miniature from the Great Mongol *Shāh-nāme* ("Book of the King") of Ferdowsī, 1317-1335/36 ca. Dublin, The Chester Beatty Library, ms. CBL Per 111.5. © *The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin*.

The chronology, together with numismatic evidence, suggest that the character Phraotes mentioned in Philostratus' biographical work should be identified with a member of the family of king Gondophares, or indeed, most probably with the king himself. Gondophares (cfr. Indian Gondapharna, from Old-Persian Vindafarna, "May he find glory") was the Indo-Parthian King of Drangiana, Arachosia, and Punjab, including the city of Taxila, from about 21 to 47 CE.[29] More generally, it seems that 'Gondophares' was a 'winner of glory' title which became a sort of family name for many subsequent members of the dynasty. As is well known, Gondophares is the king mentioned in the *Acts of Thomas* (17-29): in this Christian apocryphal text of the early third century (composed probably in Syriac, but present also in the Greek version), the king is driven to wisdom and baptized by St. Thomas, together with his brother Gad.[30] If we consider the phonetic proximity between the couple Gad/Gondophares, with all its variants (epigraphic, numismatic, and so on), and the multiple forms given for the literary name of Keyd (including Kand, Qefend, and Keydāvar), we may hypothesize an important role for the figure of the Indo-Parthian king in the formation of the literary character of the Indian sage king who became Alexander's ally in the Arabic and Persian narratives. In the process of literary exchange which led to the birth of Keyd's character, it seems not yet possible to establish direct textual links. Still, the literary texts concerning the figure of Phraotes / Gondophares, king of Taxila, point out two meaningful connections: in one case (Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*) the text provides the explicit association with Alexander and all the main features of Keyd's wise nature and behaviour; in the other case (the *Acts of Thomas*) the key element of the Christian faith is added. In Ferdowsi's *Šāhnāme* king Eskandar marries Keyd's daughter according to the Christian rite.

Of course other relevant segments of the Keyd narrative probably derive from a number of different sources other than those mentioned here – possibly Middle Persian or Indian – but so far this has not been established definitively.[31] Nevertheless, the strong literary connections between the Persian narrative and the Greek sources briefly glimpsed here point to a clear link. Viewed in this light, these texts are suggestive of a gradual process of spontaneous geopolitical updating. This process took place on a diachronic level, generating a shift from the figure of king Ambhi/Táxiles to that of king Keyd (both allies of Alexander against Porus, the first in historical sources, the second in the Islamic versions of the legend), through the mediation of king Gondophares (presented as a Christian in the sole literary source that mentions him). But the updating was also geographical, from the city of Taxila in the Indus Valley (capital of the kingdoms of both Ambhi and Gondophares, today in Pakistan's province of Punjab), to the city of Kannauj, on the Ganges, Keyd's royal seat in the *Šāhnāme*. This area emerged as the new Indian frontier for the Muslim armies guided by the Ghaznavid Sultan Maḥmūd, who was the unloved dedicatee of Ferdowsī's poem.[32]

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[29] Mukherjee 1968. See also Puri 1994, 196-202.

[30] On Gondophares in the literary tradition, see Bivar 2003. Another question to consider is whether echoes of events connected to Gondophares' dynasty have been incorporated into the 'Sistan cycle' present in the *Šāhnāme* and in other independent Persian epics.

[31] Further attention should be given to the pahlavi name Kēd, 'magician, diviner', and to the appearing of a wise character named Keyd in other important Persian stories, like that of the Sasanian king Ardašīr and his son Šāpūr (see Ferdowsī 1984, 174-175)

4. Ethnographic acknowledgment – Persia

In a very well known passage of the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, Darius sends three peculiar gifts to Alexander, who is about to leave for a trip across Syria: the gifts are a whip (*skýtos*), a ball (*sfâira*), and a casket of gold (PC, I 36).[33] In terms of the first two gifts, the text provides a precise double (and opposite) interpretation: in his covering letter Darius explains that the whip represents a reproof to Alexander, while the ball signifies letting him play like the child he is; Alexander's reply to Darius reveals that the young king instead welcomes the whip as signifying the slaves he is going to subjugate, while the ball symbolises the spherical world he is destined to conquer (PC, I 38). However, the Latin version by Leo – drawn up after a Greek text found in Constantinople – and the derivative J^1, J^2 and J^3 recensions of the *Historia de preliis*, present a different *lectio*. In Leo's text, Darius' gifts are a *spera* and a *virga curva*. The two gifts are referred to in more unusual terms in J^1 and J^2, with the obscure word *zocani* used in the place of the whip (glossed in this way: *quod factum est de virgis que curvantur a capite*, J^1), together with a *pila ludrica*, a ball for playing.[34] Of course, in the Latin text, Alexander's interpretation of the first gift requires some adjustment with respect to the Greek version: *per zocani intelligo quia sicut illud curvum est a capite, sic curvabunt ante me capita sua omnes potentissimi reges*.

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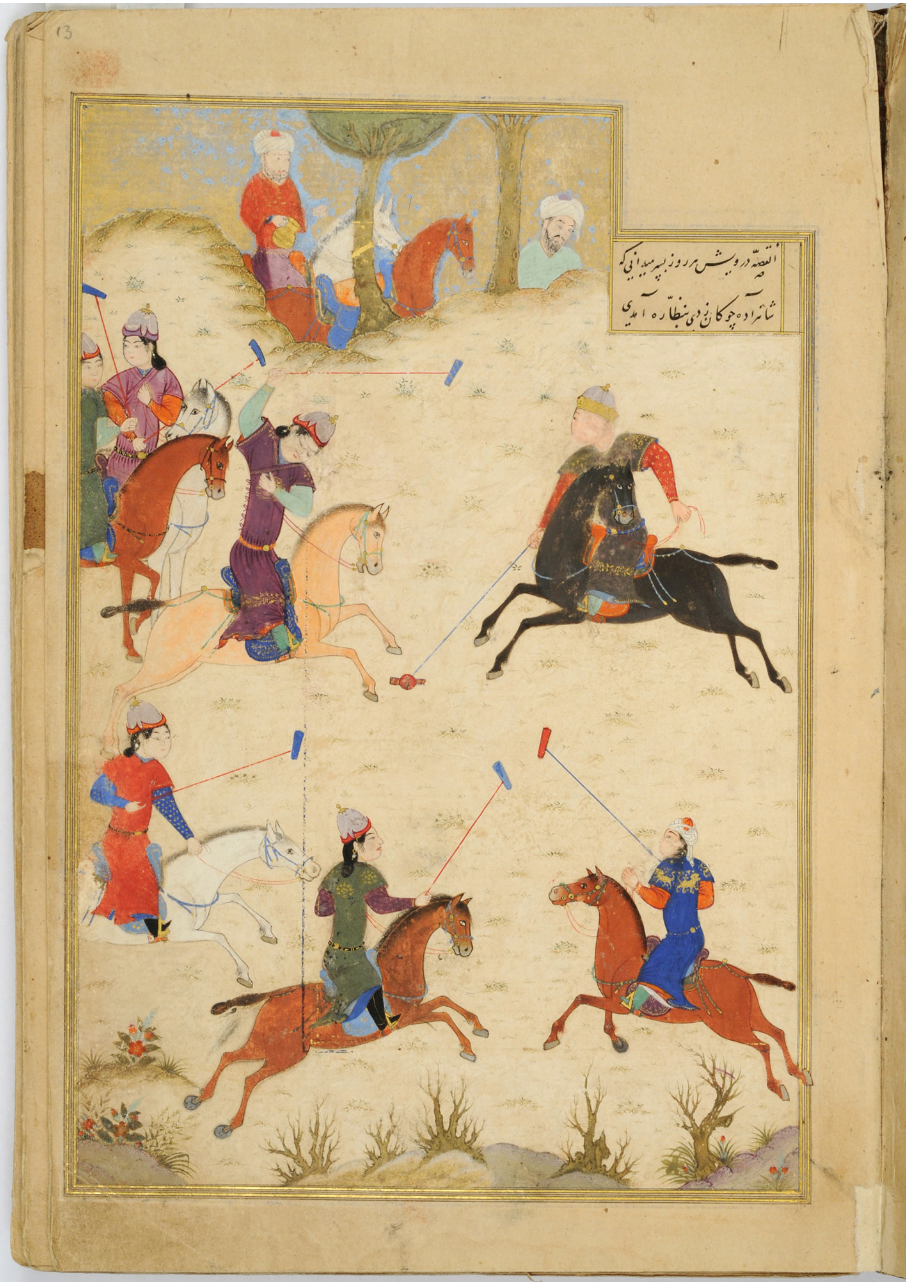
[32] On Alexander and India in the romance, see Stoneman 2008, 67-90, plus 91-106 (on the encounter with the Brahmans). For a new comprehensive approach to the complex issue of Alexander's legacy in India, see Ray-Potts 2007.

[33] Stoneman 2007, 82-91, 196-205, 330-341, 432-439. See also Kroll 1926, 40-43.

[34] Pfister 1913, 67; Bergmeister 1975, 68-71.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القصه درویش هر روز بسر میدانی که
شاهزاده چوگان زدی بنظاره آمدی

Fig. 3. Scene of polo game. Miniature from the manuscript of Prince Baysunghur *Rasā'el* ("Treatises", known as *Anthology*), 1427. Florence, Berenson Collection, Villa I Tatti, ms. Persian 1, f. 13r. Reproduced by permission of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

We can reconstruct that the unusual term *zocani* is a transcription of the Persian word *čowgān*, ‘mallet’, used in the traditional Persian game of *gūy-o-čowgān*, literally ‘the ball and the mallet’, that is the ‘polo’, known in medieval Byzance as *tzukánion*.[35] The Arabic and Persian accounts of this episode unanimously offer this reading, together with Darius’ invitation to play (*ṣawlajān*, ‘mallet’, is the Arabic corruption of *čowgān*; it is used for instance by the great historian Ṭabarī, d. 923).[36] This is Neẓāmī’s version, in his *Šarafnāme*:[37]

> یکي گوي و چوگان بقاصد سپرد   قفیزي پر از کنجد ناشمرد
> He gave the envoy a polo mallet and a ball, together with a bushel full
> with a great amount of sesame

Instead of a teasing provocation, a different and deeper sense of Darius’ challenge could be found in the oldest royal Persian tradition, in which the polo game represented the main exercise of young knights. The game is ascribed this meaning in the pahlavi text *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* (“Book of the Gests of Ardashir, son of Papak”), where the future king, founder of the Sasanian kingdom, and then also his nephew Ohrmazd, stand out in playing polo.[38] In Ferdowsī’s *Šāhnāme*, this role is given to Šāpūr, son of Ardašīr. Having distinguished himself in the game under his father’s proud gaze, Šāpūr eventually is acknowledged by his father as the legitimate heir to the throne, and rewarded by the king with a precious treasure.[39] A number of fine miniatures portray this episode in the manuscript tradition. [See fig. 3] But Ferdowsī describes other significant polo matches as well, such as the one held between the two teams led by the Iranian hero, Siyāwūš, and by Afrāsiyāb, head of the eternal enemy tribe, the Turanians.

Inserted into this different cultural frame, we seem to be able to provide a more consistent and less painstakingly symbolic interpretation of Darius’ gifts and his challenge: the barbarous invader is admonished, and reminded that he inexorably lacks those royal qualities required to become a true Persian king.[40] In Neẓāmī's work, Alexander replies that he will use the mallet to push the ball of the world towards his camp. Interestingly enough, some medieval vernacular texts deriving from the *Historia de preliis* seem partly cognizant of the matter. In the French *Roman d'Alexandre en prose* (13th century), we find a direct translation of the *zocani*, 'virga curva', in a 'crosse' 'courbe au bout'.[41] A beautiful miniature in ms. Harley 4979 in the British Library (f. 28v) shows a robust polo mallet in the hand of Alexander.[42]

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[35] See also Piemontese 1999b, 13-15; Mölk 2002. Since Leo found his source in Byzantium, Mölk considers the appearing of the term *zocani* a reflection of the establishment of the polo game in that capital, since the 5th century. What follows in this paper suggests instead that the impulse more likely came from the Persian world, although we can’t guess at what stage of the transmission.

[36] Ṭabarī 1881-1882, 695.

[37] Neẓāmī-e Ganje’ī 1368Š/1989, 183-184. As we see, the third gift is variable: sesame was already inserted as an additional gift in the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*.

[38] See Nöldeke 1878.

[39] Ferdowsī 1984, 169-173.

Is it possible, then, that a misunderstood Persian cultural notion, or even textual *lectio*, can explain the appearance of the odd couple, sphere/whip, in the Greek passage of the *Romance*? This is difficult to establish with certainty, and is perhaps too audacious to argue, although we must consider, in addition, that the oldest version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* is already a conglomerate of materials with a very different provenance: it has been proposed, for example, that the work's origins partially derived from a series of epistolary narratives produced as exercises in schools of rhetoric.[43] In fact, the so-called *Letters on wonders* (PC, II 24-41; III 17; III 27-28) show clearly that the interpolation of non-Greek material into the *Alexander Romance* took place at a very early stage. If this is not the case with the mallet/whip issue, we nevertheless are faced with an exceptional, very sophisticated and yet reasonable 'ethnographic' updating, accomplished along the 'oriental' route of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, but also with the resilience to spread back into Latin sources. More generally, the abundance and variety of material related to the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* in many different languages, which we can appreciate today, encourages us to consider the transmission of this text much less schematically than has been done so far.

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[40] Although audacious, it may be possible to discern a resemblance with the tone of Darius' invitation in his letter, in the Latin text: *direxi tibi speram atque curvam virgam cantramque auream ut exerceas et cogites iocandi causam* (Leo: Pfister 1913, 65; the passage is slightly developed in J versions).

[41] Hilka 1920, 70-76.

[42] I wish to thank Maud Pérez-Simon for drawing my attention to this image on the occasion of the *Journée d'étude* on *Le voyage d'Alexandre au Paradis terrestre: Orient et Occident, regards croisés*, held at the Institut Historique Allemand, Paris, 4 March 2011. A description of the features of this remarkable manuscript is in Pérez-Simon 2011. Indeed, a representation of players using a curved mallet and ball – in what appears as a prototype of hockey – is depicted in a Greek bas-relief from the end of the sixth century BC; see Fittà 1997, 105. However, the context of Darius' challenge does not seem to have any connection with that isolated, and as yet unexplained, visual evidence.

[43] In general, see Merkelbach 1977, 11-92, 118, and 230-252. See also Jouanno 2002, 13-55; Stoneman 2007, 553-555.

5. Technological progress – The abyss

The last sequence presented here is one of the clearest cases of cosmographic relevance in Alexander saga, and probably one of the most fascinating: Alexander's exploration of the abyss. We can find an initial overview of the literary trajectory of the legend in the renowned paper by D.J.A. Ross on «Alexander and the Faithless Lady: a submarine adventure», which naturally did not deal with the oriental versions of this story.[44] As far as it is possible to establish, the Persian version included in Amīr Khosrow's *Ā'īne-ye Eskandarī*, "The Alexandrine Mirror" (ca. 1300), with its 250 verses, is to be considered the *textus amplior* of the episode in the whole of Alexander literature.[45] As distinct from some other variants, Alexander's impulse in this romance is not cupidity but a genuine desire for knowledge. Again, Alexander seeks directions for finding the correct route to explore the abyss from the *ḥakīm-e elāhī*, 'divine sage', Plato, who also gives Alexander a vast *pandnāme* ('book of counsels'), and who reluctantly accepts to follow the king on his travels in the Atlantic Ocean (*daryā-ye akhẓar*, 'green sea', and *daryā-ye maghreb*, 'sea of the west'). We are told that the submarine was built by Aristotle, while the description of its construction is worthy of a treatise on mechanical engineering:[46]

> After having reinforced [the fleet] with joinery, they thought of a structure in the shape of a flask.
> The foundrymen of Rum, who can make pitch from stone without any fire, set to work.
> Following Aristotle's instructions, they soon put glass over the fire:
> When it had melted, they put it in the mould, forging a transparent chest.
> Its weight was lighter than a fresh flower, its fineness was more revealing than a simple heart.
> It showed the passenger from the outside, like a face reflected in the clear water.
> Its depth was one cubit, exact and pure, and three cubits its breadth, four cubits its length:
> A long rectangle, for lying down and standing up.

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[44] Ross 1985. For a brief but rich survey on the tradition related to this episode, see Stoneman 2008, 111-114, with related bibliography.

[45] Amīr Khosrow-e Dehlavī 1977, 261-273. See Casari 1999, 43-58; Piemontese 1999a.

[46] Amīr Khosrow-e Dehlavī 1977, 243-244.

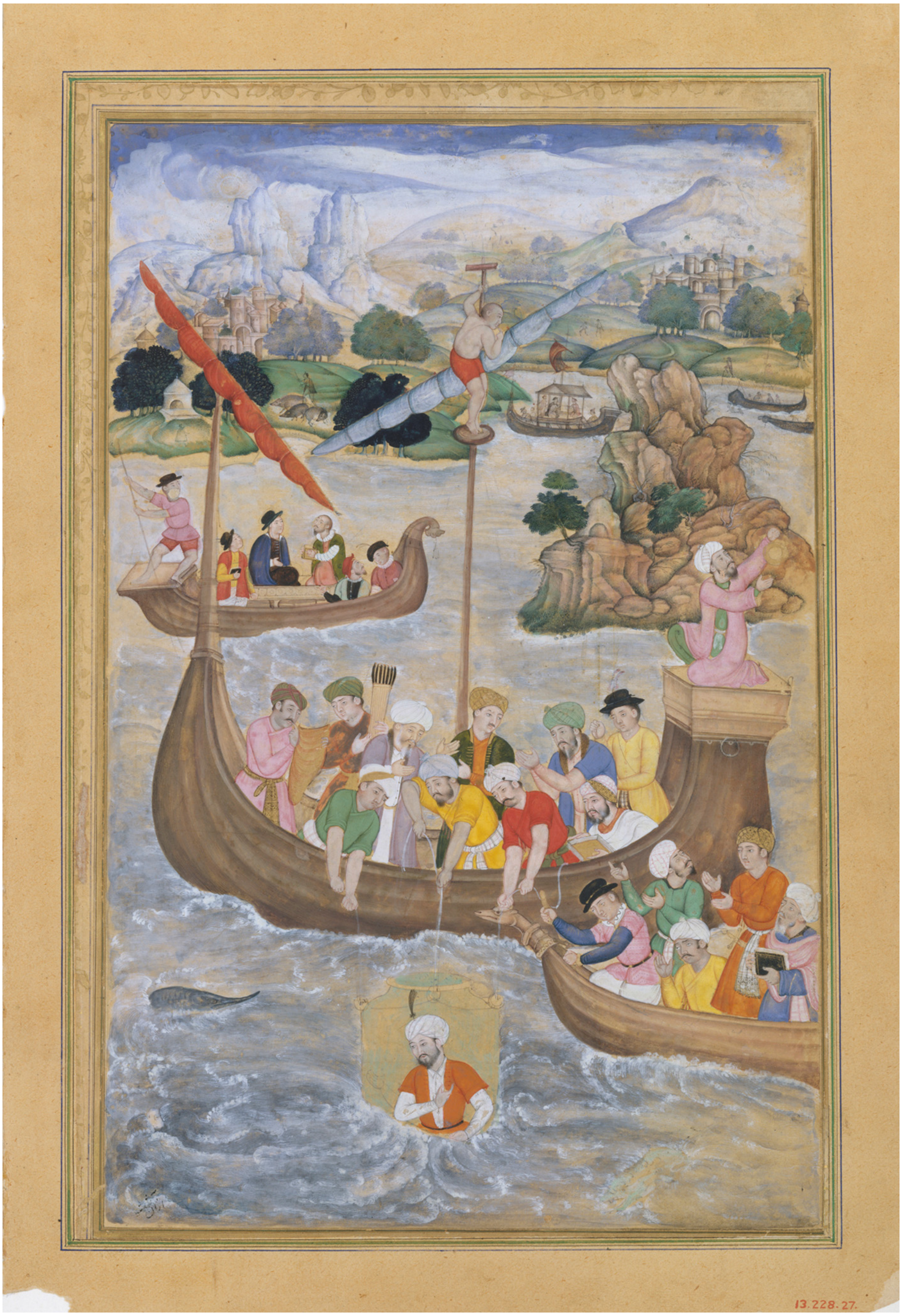

Fig. 4. Alexander in the submarine. Page from a *Khamse* ("Pentalogy") by Amīr Khosrow-e Dehlavī, 1595 ca. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, n. 13.228.27. @ The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Then they husked coconuts, slipping off what was sticking to them,
And they produced ropes for the chest, each one of them long as one month's road.

It is worth stressing that historical Aristotle was one of the first scientists who described the physical principles for the diving bell, possibly the most ancient device for submarine immersions (Aristotle, *Problems*, XVI, 8; XXXII, 5), apart from the much more rudimentary hollow reed technique, which could serve just one diver at a time, and not far beneath the water's surface (on this, see again Aristotle, *On the parts of animals*, II, 16).[47] Interestingly enough, according to one Persian narrative tradition, it was Plato, rather, who possessed the secret of submarine swimming.[48]

In the Persian tradition, Amīr Khosrow's narrative of the episode includes in some manuscript versions a beautiful miniature of this refined device, in line with equivalent European iconography of the same subject. It is important to note, however, that these miniatures don't take account of the precise term *qārūre*, 'flask', used by the Persian poet, and they represent instead the vessel as a simple glass barrel or cylinder. [See fig. 4]

Rather surprising is the discovery of only one other analogous description of such machinery, in the near-contemporary German *Alexander* by Ulrich von Eschenbach (1280-1287). Despite being vastly distant in its geographic and linguistic coordinates, the work has some interesting correlations with Khosrow's version:[49]

er hiez machen ein glas
ich wil iu sagen wie daz was,
ob mich des die wârheit mante.
daz underteil was als ein kante.
dar ûf was ein überlit
gar künstlich versmit,
als die meister daz erdâhten,
die ez veste zesamen brâhten,

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[47] Like most of Aristotle's works, also the problematic text of the *Problémata* found its way into Arabic, although we don't have a complete version at present; see Filius 2006. The work *On the parts of animals* was also translated into Arabic by Yaḥyā ibn al-Bitrīq (9th century), see Walzer 1960; see also D'Ancona 2011.

[48] Ṭarsūsī 1965, II, 364-365.

[49] Ulrich von Eschenbach 1888, 643-644. The principal discussion of Ulrich von Eschenbach's account of the episode focuses on the illustrated manuscripts of it: see Ross 1971, 66-68.

als sie wolden des geniezen.
dâ die teil zesamen stiezen,
dâ heten siez alsô zuo brâht:
listeclich was ez erdâht
und gevestent gar envollen:
lîm, öl, zigel, boumwollen,
dâ mit vermachet daz glas
alumme an den fuogen was.
in îsenbant und an keten
vaste siez gehangen heten.
ez was gar dicke und doch lieht.
der meister mir dâ von vergiht
ez het ein hals offen lanc,
daz hôhe über daz wazzer swanc:
dâ mit daz glas vienc den luft.
ich hânz vür wunderlîchen guft.

> «He had a glass structure prepared. I will tell what it was like if the truth about it should occur to me. The lower part of it was like a jug. Upon it was a lid very ingeniously welded on as the master-smiths devised it – they brought it close together as they wanted to feel confident about it. Where the parts met they had joined it thus. It was cunningly devised and made completely secure. Birdlime, oil, brick-earth, cotton – with these the glass was sealed all round at the joints. They had it suspended firmly from chains in iron bands. It was very thick and yet light – the master told me about it. It had a long open neck which swung to and fro high above the water so that the glass might receive air. I believe it is a wonderful boast!»[50]

Unfortunately, all of the manuscripts containing the full text of Ulrich's poem are not illustrated, but an abbreviated version of it is embedded in an illustrated late fourteenth-century manuscript of the *Weltchronik* by Rudolf von Ems, now in Wolfenbüttel, and discussed by Ross.[51] This image shows

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[50] This is a slightly enlarged and corrected version from that of Ross 1985, 399.

[51] See Ross 1971, 49-79. The manuscript in question is Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 1.2.5. Aug. Fol. A partially similar acknowledgement of Ulrich's device can be found in at least one other representation of the episode, in a manuscript of the *High German Historienbibeln*, which included a section devoted to the life of Alexander: Vienna, Nationalbibliothek 2823, f. 370v; see Ross 1977, 116-118, and fig. 166.

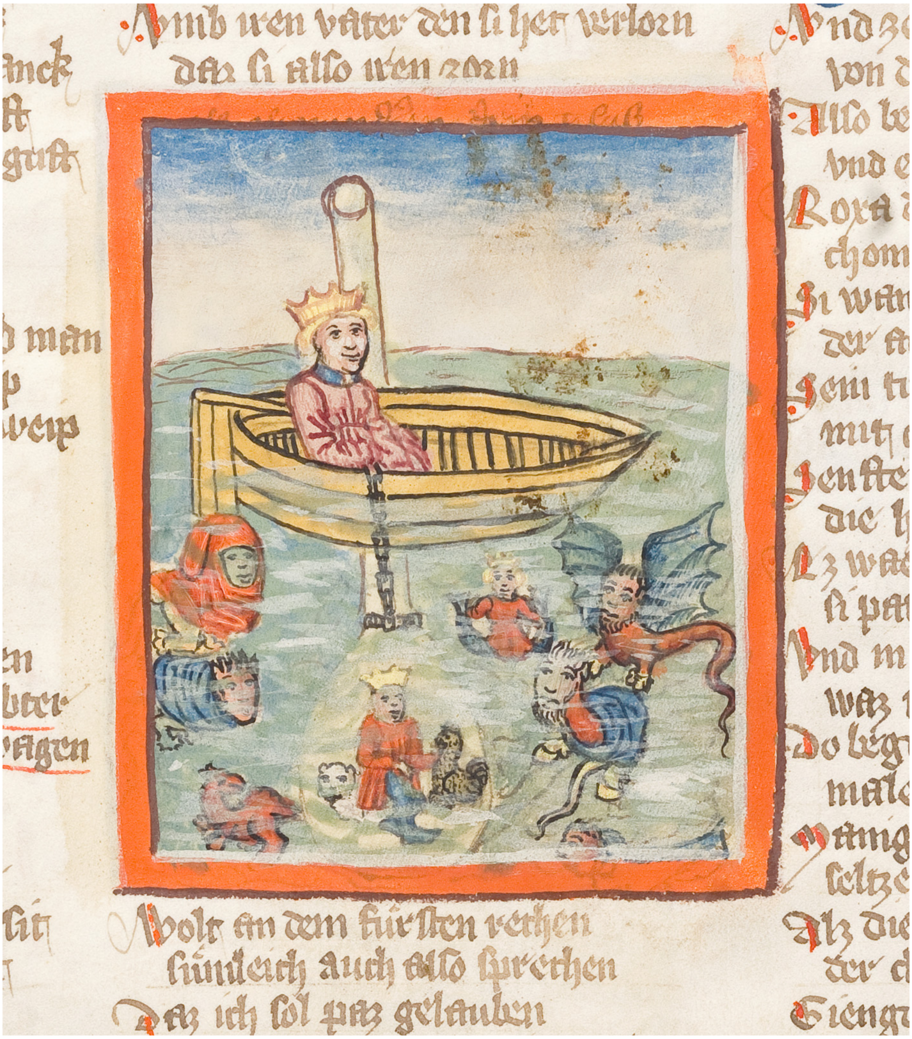

Fig. 5. Alexander in the submarine. Miniature from Rudolf von Hems, *Weltchronik* ("World Chronicle"), 14th century. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 1.5.2 Aug. 2°, f. 128r.

the device quite clearly in the form of a sort of Chianti flask with a long neck extending above the surface of the sea. [See fig. 5]

The common points shared by our two Persian and German texts are enlightening for our consideration of Alexander literature. While it is not possible here to demonstrate definitively a common source for these works, it is a question that warrants further research. For our purposes, however, we can see that both authors are not just fascinated by the narrative power of Alexander's wondrous adventure in the abyss; they also have taken care to outline the actual workings of the machine. In the case of the German book, the author includes a detailed description of the problem of breathing once inside the diving bell (actually combining the two different principles of the bell and the hollow reed, both described by Aristotle). In the case of the Persian text, we find only an implicit reference to the original form of the device: the *qārūre*, 'flask'. With this term, which remains unexplained and unrepresented both in the text and the miniatures, we may be observing a literary (and technological) fossil unconsciously saved throughout the transmission of the legend.[52]

Many other details concerning Alexander's exploration of the abyss could be analyzed further, but the constraints of this paper limit our analysis to one final point: a possible connection between Amīr Khosrow's narrative and a very ancient cosmographic account. In Khosrow's text, after Alexander's immersion, an angelic sea-guard dissolves a mud curtain to enable the king to see clearly, upon which the king's eyes are met with an amazing vision of thousands of enormous fish, «their heads like a mountain, their mouths like a cave», «their teeth, sharp sickles of Death»:[53]

کهن ماهیانی بهیکل شگرف   پلی بسته هر یک بدریای ژرف
جهانی دراز از سر تا بدم   که دریا بپهنای شان گشت گم
کشف هر یکی کرد کوهی روان   چو پیلی برافگنده بر گستوان
Every ancient fish, with its enormous size, built a bridge through the deep sea:
A wide world from the head to the tail, in whose expanse the sea got lost,
Each carapace was like a flowing mountain, just like armour thrown upon an elephant.

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[52] The Persian version must have influenced the composition of the Mongol one (dated 1312, extant in four fragments, one of which concerns the under-sea adventure), where the submarine is called after the Persian word *qarābe*, 'demijohn'; see Cleaves 1959; see also Casari 1999, 53-54. It is worth mentioning a note provided by the great Arab scientist al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048) in his *Kitāb al-jamāhir fī ma'rifat al-jawāhir* ("The Comprehensive Book on the Knowledge of precious Stones"): in outlining the tools used in the hard daily work of pearl fishermen, he describes a type of leather oxygen mask, connected by a long leather neck to a large receptacle, full of air, floating on the water surface. See al-Bīrūnī 1355H/1936, 136.

[53] Amīr Khosrow-e Dehlavī 1977, 267.

We can compare this account with the description of a visit to a wondrous island in the Greek *Alexander Romance* of the Pseudo-Callisthenes (PC III, 17, α version). It elaborates how, in search of treasure,

> a hundred men embarked and sailed towards an island – or so the evil barbarians had called it, but it was actually a sea-monster. They went towards the shore and steered the boats into a sort of port. But after a while the beast suddenly plunged into the abyss. We cried out but the beast vanished, and all of them, including my dear friend, were swallowed up dreadfully by the water.[54]

If we consider Amīr Khosrow's descriptions of the «ancient fish» plunged in the abyss with their «flowing mountain(s)», it is possible to discern the clear metaphor of a «wide world» made up of submerged islands. Thus, it seems that this Persian imaginative description of the depths of the Atlantic Ocean echoes the mythical account of the sinking of the land of Atlantis, related by Plato in his *Timaeus* (24-25). A few verses later, Alexander meets a mysterious sea-people, who live in the abyss, and offer him – through the angel's translation of their mute language – a severe admonishment against his untamed ambition:[55]

> O disloyal, ungrateful man! You don't recognize the grace of God!
> You have seen the world up and down, are you not sated with this vain
> wandering?
> Man always oversteps his limits, as food grows because of greed.
> Any prudence gets lost in his acts; worse than man is only man.

This passage represents just one of the many instances of advice received by the insatiable Alexander throughout his literary life. But, following this line of analysis a little further, it is tempting to perceive a correspondence between Alexander's admonishment and Plato's explanation for the sinking of Atlantis, which he stated was the result of a severe punishment for its people's loss of humility (as related in his *Critias*, XII, 120-121, before the dialogue breaks off).

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[54] Kroll 1926, 107. The theme of the island-monster is spread throughout world literature: among its most ancient manifestations, one may mention the Avestic hint at Keresâspa's story (*Yasna* IX, 10-11).

[55] See Amīr Khosrow-e Dehlavī 1977, 268-269: here I have presented only a selection of verses.

Of course, in the case of our Persian *Alexander Romance* this is more a literary suggestion than philological evidence. This is due partly to the fact that the literary route of Plato's legend on Atlantis throughout ancient and medieval sources is marked more by silence than by scepticism.[56] In addition, there is no evidence that Atlantis' myth explicitly appeared in the context of Islamic literary traditions. Nevertheless, it is not without significance that Arabic bibliographers claim that Plato's *Timaeus* was translated into Arabic at least three times, by Yaḥyā ibn al-Biṭrīq, Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, and Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī. Despite the fact that none of these translations apparently has survived, an Arabic summary of the whole of the *Timaeus* is still extant.[57]

Moreover, it is worth drawing attention to another slightly different version of the same submarine adventure recently identified in a Persian *Dāstān-e Ḏū'l-Qarnayn*, "Story of the Two-Horned", probably originating from a collection of *Qeṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, "Stories of the Prophets", but included in a manuscript volume whose main body is a treatise on natural sciences. This as yet unstudied manuscript is located in the Library of the Museum of Natural History in Paris.[58] It was drawn up in India at some time between the 16th and the 17th century, although the text is almost certainly more ancient. On a general level, this work is representative of the great flourishing of stories that surround the figure of Alexander-Ḏū'l-Qarnayn in the fluid context of the genre of *Qeṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* that were widespread collections of popular and erudite materials. In this case, the manuscript offers a new element in the description of Alexander's journey to the depths of the sea. After having sighted a whirlpool (*gerdāb*) in the sea, Iskandar is seized by a pressing desire to explore it. He makes his assistants build a glass case, but this time he does not want to go alone: he asks his guide Aflāṭūn, Plato, to be his companion in the submarine, and they travel together, possibly following in the tracks of an old Platonic myth (ff. 191r-192r). An amusing miniature illustrates the text. [See fig. 6]

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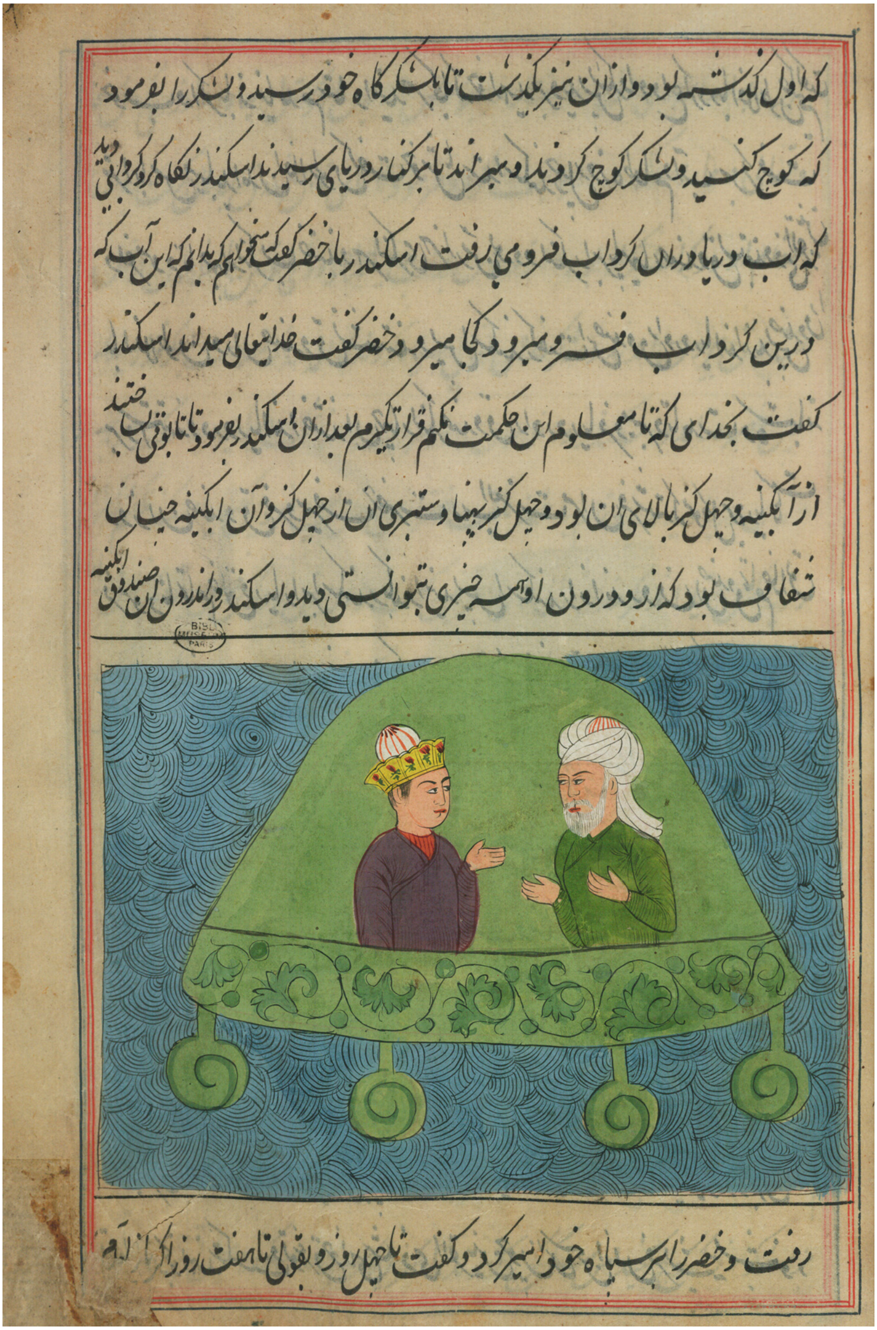
[56] See an overview in Vidal-Naquet 2006, especially pp. 45-63. Among the few and usually quite meagre references that ancient authors devoted to the myth of Atlantis, it is worth noting the observation made by the Christian rethor Arnobius of Sicca, concerning the connection between the destruction of the continent and the conquest of Alexander (*Against the Gentils*, I, 5, 1: text from the 4th century, at the time of Diocletian's persecution against the Christians).

[57] See Walzer 1986a; Kraus-Walzer 1951.

[58] *Qeṣṣe-ye Ḏū'l-Qarnayn*: ms. 472 Bibliothèque du Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris, ff. 173v-195v.



که اول گذشته بود وازان نیز بگذشت تا با لشکرگاه خود رسید و لشکر را بفرمود
که کوچ کنید و لشکر کوچ کردند و میراندند تا بر کنار دریای رسیدند اسکندر نگاه کرد گردابی دید
که آب دریا دران گرداب فرو می رفت اسکندر با خضر گفت که میخواهم که بدانم که این آب که
درین گرداب فرو میرود کجا میرود خضر گفت خدای تعالی میداند اسکندر
گفت بخدای که تا معلوم این حکمت نکنم قرار نگیرم بعد ازان اسکندر بفرمود تا تابوتی ساختند
از آبگینه و چهل گز بالای آن بود و چهل گز پهنا و ستبری آن از چهل گز و آن آبگینه چنان
شفاف بود که از درون او همه چیزی توانستی دید و اسکندر در اندرون آن صندوق آبگینه

رفت و خضر را بر سپاه خود امیر کرد و گفت تا چهل روز و بقولی تا هفت روز اگر [illegible]

Fig. 6. Alexander and Plato in the submarine. Miniature from a *Dāstān-e Ḏū’l-Qarnayn*, “Story of the Two-Horned”, 16th-17th century. Paris, Bibliothèque du Musée d’Histoire Naturelle, ms. 472, f. 191r. © *Bibliothèque centrale M.N.H.N. Paris*.

6. The wonders of the creatures

As we bring our analysis to a close, we should recall that our investigation principally has been concerned with narrative texts and stories, rather than scientific treatises. However, what this essay hopes to have shown is that we would do well to explore in more depth the nature of narrative texts in the ancient and medieval periods, especially in the Islamic sphere. The Muslim lettered man of the Classical period is, and considers himself to be, an intellectual in every sense: a poet, but one who is also versed in the traditional disciplines (rhetoric, logic, theology, and law) as well as the rational ones (philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, the natural sciences, and music). In the Persian context alone, much has been written on the remarkable geopolitical competencies shown by Ferdowsī in his *Šāhnāme*, while fascinating studies have been produced concerning the scientific knowledge revealed by Neẓāmī in his *Khamse*, "Pentalogy". Within the vast expanses of Dār al-Islam, from the 11th century this immense knowledge often was collected in great scientific encyclopaedias, with a geographical basis, sometimes referred to as a unified genre with the title *'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*, "The wonders of the creatures", an expression partially equivalent to the Latin term *mirabilia*.[59]

It is a contention of this essay that all Alexander Romances should be read in light of the extensive contents of these remarkable encyclopaedic treatises. These rich works usually mixed chapters on cosmology, astronomy, geography, natural sciences, ethnography, and technology, and in many cases they were framed within historical references and philosophical *excursus*. As an illustration of this point, and by way of conclusion, we may observe that the Persian *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* by al-Hamadānī (12th century) contains forty-eight different episodes on Alexander that are integrated as anecdotal commentaries on descriptions of mountains, rivers, peoples, plants, stones, and so on.[60] Taken together, they constitute a veritable complete romance which once more testifies to us that, for centuries, Alexander, the king explorer, was the literary guarantor of this cosmographic knowledge.

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[59] On the definition of this relevant field of medieval Arabic and Persian literature, as yet only partially studied, see the stimulating discussion in Von Hees 2005.

[60] See Hamadānī 1375Š/1996; Piemontese 2005.

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‘Umāra’s *Qiṣṣa al-Iskandar* as a Model of the Arabic Alexander Romance

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The surviving version of *Qiṣṣa al-Iskandar* by eighth-century author ‘Umāra Ibn Zayd is a sixteenth-century copy (from 1504 a.d.) by the scribe ‘Ubayd Allah Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Mun’im b. Muḥammad al-Anṣarī al-Khazrajī al-Malikī.[1] The text spans eighty mss. folios or 160 pages and is in every respect a full-length Arabic Alexander Romance. *Qiṣṣa al-Iskandar* is unedited except for short excerpts that have been reproduced by Friedlaender (1913), Zuwiyya (2001), and Doufikar-Aerts (2010).

Qiṣṣa al-Iskandar is in some senses a model text for the Arabic Alexander Romance because it contains well preserved versions of most of the episodes that represent the essence of the Arabic Alexander Romance and distinguish the Arabic from other traditions such as those of Persia and the West. This paper uses ‘Umāra’s text to define the Arabic Alexander romance. Where convenient, we will offer an interpretation of certain episodes, and compare ‘Umāra with other Arabic texts.

The Arabic Alexander’s long and rich literary tradition survives in perhaps six full-length versions of which I am aware: ‘Umāra, our focus here, the *Rrekontamiento del rrey Alisandre*, which is a Spanish Aljamiado-Morisco translation of an Arabic Romance, two Hispano-Arabic texts, one known as *Qiṣṣa Dhulqarnayn* and another *Ḥadīth Dhulqarnayn*, *Sīra al-Malik Iskandar Dhī’l-Qarnayn*, and finally al-Ṣūrī, which is the longest amounting to 460 pages in the version I know, and is significantly later than the other texts. The *Sīra* text has not been edited and I have not seen it. Nor am I as familiar with al-Ṣūrī as I am with the other texts, and thus my comments in this paper will focus on ‘Umāra and its relationship to three of

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[1] See Zuwiyya, *Islamic Legends,* p.25. ‘Umāra’s ms. is held at the British Museum Add. 5928.

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the full-length texts, namely, the *Rrek., QDh* and *HDh.*[2] A host of abbreviated versions or epitome's also exist, such as by Mubashshir ibn Fātik edited by B. Meissner, Ibn Isḥāq, recreated by Gordon Newby (1989), Ibn Hishām edited by Lidzbarski, al-Ṭabarī, Mas'ūdī, al-Tha'labī in his *'Arā'is al-Majālis fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiya'*, Ibn al-Jawzī in his *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, al-Dinawarī in his *Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, to name just a few because virtually any Arabic compilation of the Middle Ages will have something to say about al-Iskandar.[3]

'Umāra, as well as the *Rrek.*, *QDh* and *HD*, includes the Greek core including the campaigns against Darius of Persia, Porus of India, Candace of Samira, the Amazon women, as well as the Macedon's encounter with the Brahmans, episodes such as the Temples of the Sun and Moon, and letters such as the famous one concerning the Wonders of India, among other things. With respect to the Greek core, 'Umāra like the other Arabic versions does not vary substantially from Western tradition, and this material will not be the focus of this paper.

Of the Quranic episodes, 'Umāra provides extensive glosses. In the Quran, God gives Dhulqarnayn the means to all ends, which 'Umāra says manifests itself in the fact that Alexander marches across the waters traversing enormous distances in little time. The Quran says he reaches the land of the setting sun, which 'Umāra says is inhabited by the people of Jābalqā. From there he reappears in the land of the rising sun, and 'Umāra says this is inhabited by the people of Jābarsā. In both cases, 'Umāra glosses the fragmentary Quranic episode to describe the people and their eponymous cities. Subsequently, in the Quran Dhulqarnayn comes upon a people living between to mountains who were so primitive they could barely comunicate in words (82:92-93). 'Umāra says these people are the Hāwīl[4] whose counterparts the Tāwīl[5] live on the exact opposite edge of the earth. To gloss these verses, 'Umāra takes Alexander to the farthest reaches of the civilized world, whose bounds are penetrated by the savages of Gog and Magog living on the far side of the mountains. God opens Dhuqarnayn's intellect to allow him to understand all languages. They beg of him to construct a wall to protect them from Gog and Magog, and he grants their request. Thus in 'Umāra and all the full-length Alexander legends one finds an extensive account of the construction of this wall or barrier, made of iron and clad in copper so that the Gog and Magog, who spend their days trying to dig holes in the wall, remain penned in until Judgment Day.

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[2] The full-length texts are what Doufikar-Aerts calls the 'romances.' She provides valuable descriptions of these texts in her *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, 2010, pp. 35-91.

[3] See Doufikar-Aerts description of some of these versions in *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, 2010, pp. 21-34.

[4] See 12v, where it says the Hāwīl obeyed Dhulqarnayn and heeded the call to monotheism.

[5] Whereas the Hāwīl inhabit the "right side" of the earth, on the left are the Tāwīl (f.12v). The Hāwīl also came to obey Dhulqarnayn (12v), and it is they who show Dhulqarnayn the wonders of the trees of the sun and moon. The ms. form referring to these wonders, *'ajūbat* [sic] (13r) for the common plural *'ajā'ib*, could suggest a dialectal variation of Arabic that may help to identify the provenance of the ms.

With this cycle of episodes, in 'Umāra's text the figure of Dhulqarnayn plays an eschatological role in God's plan for mankind: he spreads the news of Islam throughout the world East and West, and he keeps the barbaric forces away from the civilized world for the course of history. One also sees 'Umāra's version of these events as a verse by verse Quranic commentary or *tafsīr*.

Two related episodes in 'Umāra's text are the voyage to the Land of Darkness and to Mt. Qāf. Given the medieval Arabic conception of the shape of the earth, Alexander's journey to the setting sun and rising sun—as per the Quran—implies that he must necessarily come to the ring of mountains surrounding the world at the edge, known as Qāf.[6] To reach Qāf he must also travel through the eternal shadow that Qāf casts over the region of the earth at its feet. The idea behind the Darkness could be that Qāf is so high that it blocks the sun even at its zenith.

His first journey takes him to a smooth (*shāmikhan*) green mountain, greener than one could imagine. Its greenness comes from the legendary belief that Mt. Qāf is made of emerald. Atop the mountain is a temple of gold occupied by a figure who sleeps in a bed surrounded by candles and next to him lies a pile of red sulphur (8r), the greatest and most rare of elixirs. A voice calls out and tells Dhulqarnayn that it is the King of the Jinn and that beyond that place are a people whose language is incomprehensible. Instead of warning Dhulqarnayn about trespassing on lands lying outside of mankind's domain, the voice tells Dhulqarnayn to ask God to enhance his intellect, his strength, and his "balāgh" or 'eloquence' [7] so that he may attain whatever he desires (8r). This amounts to a call to continue his explorations.

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[6] See Le Strange, The *Geographical Part of the Nuzhat Al-Qulūb Composed by Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī of Qazwīn in 740 (1340)*. Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1915, p. 188. Mustawfī also cites Yaqūt regarding the roots of Mt. Qāf, which are connected to all mountains on earth, so that when the Angel of Mt. Qāf moves the "cords" or "connections" that connect the mountains, he provokes earthquakes among the peoples of the earth.

[7] 'Eloquence' would be "balāgha." The meaning of "balāgh" in the MS is not altogether clear. It may be "bulgha" for sufficiency, adequacy, competence.

Further ahead towards the west is Jābarsā with its 15,000 doors. He takes it using the elements of nature, the light, the darkness, the wind, the thunder and rain, all of which he wields like weapons against his enemies. Upon his pompous entrance into Jābarsā, he meets the humble old man who ignores the passing army, recalling Diogenes. The old man explains to the world conqueror that he spends his income in thirds: one third to his parents, one third to his children, and one third for his day-to-day expenses. The narrator says that the people of Jābarsā and Jābalqā are the descendants of the Islamic prophet Ḥūd[8] (9v), which explains why there is such a virtuous sheik among them. This last detail adds an Islamic note to the encounter of Alexander with Diogenes.[9]

In another episode in this cycle of adventures, Alexander tells his troops to hang their weapons on the constellation Pleiades. Upon returning the next day to retrieve them, they find that the constellation has rotated and that they have to wait a year to get their weapons back (f.10r). This curious anecdote is also found in *QDh* and the *Rrek*.

After building Alexandria with the aid of his cousin on his mother's side al-Yasi', perhaps Elijiah, and referring here to the Green-One, al-Khidr, Dhulqarnayn places a plaque on the door to the city that states the *shahāda*: "there is no God but God alone without partners, Muhammad is his servant and messenger, and God is our witness to this testament."[10] While the construction of Alexandria is a topus in the Alexander romances and other medieval Arabic compilations, as García Gómez observes, among the *Rrek.*, *QDh*, and *HD*, only 'Umāra mentions the plaque. In his mention of Muhammad and the Islamic creed, 'Umāra is not concerned with proper chronology, but with establishing Dhulqarnayn as a prophetic figure, so that he can advance his plot. Alexander now as bearer of prophecy is further granted the privilege to ascend with the angel Zayafil, and so the two depart imminently. To further sanctify Alexander's role in sacred history 'Umāra places the revelation of the new prophet's mission in the mouth of the Prophet Muhammad and presents the ascension as a hadith (14v). In no text is the reasoning underlying the Arabic romance more clear. “His city,”[11] which he sees below during his celestial flight, and which is the topic of his dialogue with the angel, is no other than Alexandria (14v). From Alexandria his new destination is east to the rising sun. Again, he comes to the mountain with the green top (15r, l.3), referring to Qāf, the mountain that surrounds the world. After subduing the tribes of the rising sun, they inform him that beyond them to the east is the Darkness.

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[8] The account is similar in the *Rrek.*: "los de Jabalqa son los ke finkaron de las jentes de Hud, aleihi-ç-çilam, i los de Jabarsa son de los ke finkaron de las jentes de Salih" (p. 477)

[9] For Alexander's encounter with Diogenes, see Pritchard, *The History of Alexander's Battles: Historia de preliis-The J1 Version*, p. 161.

[10] This is also found in the *Rrek.*: "Femos testemonio ke no ay sennor sino Allah solo, ke no ay konpannero a el, i ke Muhammad es su sierbo i su mensajero" (p. 473).

These same inhabitants of the rising sun provide Dhulqarnayn with knowledge of the Darkness in the form of stories passed down through their ancestors, from one of Sam b. Noah’s children who sought immortality. Thus Dhulqarnayn is not the first to penetrate the Darkness in search of eternal life. This information complements what Dhulqarnayn read in the Book of Wonders given to him by his mother at the beginning of ‘Umāra’s text (4v).[12] This is not the place for an in-depth discussion of the details of the episode into the Darkness, especially since ‘Umāra touches on the usual motifs, citing as a written source the *Khabr* of Ḥasan (probably al-Baṣrī; 14v). Some highlights that set ‘Umāra apart from others are a particularly lengthy conversation with the Angel of the Mountain (“al-malak al-mawakl bi jabal qāf,” 20r, l.13). This is the angel who sits in a chair and grips the roots or reigns to all the mountains of the world since they are tied into Mt. Qāf. If God means for there to be an earthquake, the angel pulls one of the ropes.[13] This is also the angel who tells Dhulqarnayn that “since he entered the Darkness he has been walking on the waters of the high seas” (18r; trans. mine) and when he doubts he sinks in the waters surrounding the mountain (“fa shakka Dhulqarnayn,…, fa idhā huwā qad nazala fī al mā’” 18r).[14] In the Arabic romances, Dhulqarnayn can perform the miracle of walking across water by virtue of his faith, but when faith waivers he sinks into the waters like other men. The Angel of the Mountain answers a long series of questions regarding the place of the angels in relation to God’s throne in the heavens (18v-19v).[15] Upon the conclusion, Dhulqarnayn returns to his troops and meets with the newly immortal Khidr. Dhulqarnayn is surprised to learn that Khidr knows everything that the angel told him even though Khidr was not present. Khidr tells him that “ka anna kuntu ma‘aka lammā sirta fī al ẓulma” (f.20r) “it’s as if I were with you when you traveled through the Darkness.” This recalls a similar conversation that Dhulqarnayn has with Afshakhid[16] in the *Rrek.* after which Alexander exclaims, Ya Afshakhid, you are wiser than any one on earth (p.484; trans. mine)[17] because you know everything the angel told me concerning the Darkness. In this fashion, two authors recall a conversation between the hero and the Angel of the Mountain and relay it slightly differently, one preceding the journey through the Darkness and the other following it, which suggests that the two authors either used different sources or are working from an imperfect memory, rather than following a single written text.[18] Without proper closure to the Darkness cycle, one learns in ‘Umāra’s version that the newly transformed Khidr delivers a letter daily from Dhulqarnayn to his mother. It’s a sort of “airmail” because Khidr flies away with the letter (“intaqala fī al-hawā ḥatta ghāba” 20r). After this episode comes a variation on the well-known prophecy regarding Dhulqarnayn’s death (he will die when the earth beneath him is iron, the sky wood and the stars copper 20r-v). The placement of this prophecy precisely at the end of the Darkness cycle suggests that because the hero sought to penetrate the knowledge of the occult (that is, the cosmology of the heavens), forbidden to mankind, he is denied access to the fountain, which is given to Khidr, and his quest for immortality ends with a prophecy of his death, emphasizing his humanity.

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[11] “Arā madīnatī” he repeats three times during his ascent in response to the question “mādhā tarā” (14v).

[12] In the *Rrek.* it is from the Book of Eskendarius (p.482), also known as the Book of Wonders, or the Book of Adam, where Dhulqarnayn learned of the Darkness and its properties. See also Friedlaender, *Die Chadhirlegende*, p. 165.

[13] See also, *HD*, p. 41.

[14] See also *HD*: “entróle la duda, y, al saberlo Alá, dejó de sustentar su pie con lo cual Dulcarnain se vió sumergido en el Océano” (p. 42).

[15] See also *HD*, pp. 38-39.

The episode of Gog and Magog that follows is taken straight from the tradition of Quranic *tafsīr*. The narrator begins by citing a Quranic verse “thumma aṭba‘ sababan ḥatta idhā balagha bayn al-saddayni” (f.20v, l.5 and Quran18:93) and it continues his commentary “wa dhalika min qiṭā‘ al-turk” (f.20v, l.6) that refers to the region of the Turks. He gives some details about the people harrassed by the Gog and Magog. And then cites the next Quranic verse “yā dhā al-qarnayn inna yajūj wa majūj mufasidūn fī al-arḍ,” and then begins the gloss “wa hum umam min khalfinā baynanā wa baynahum fajj” (20v) and they are peoples who live beyond us where there is a great road that passes between two mountains that separate us, etc. The Arabic romances are fascinated with the dimensions of the barrier, the rate of reproduction of the people of Gog and Magog, and the distance measured in months of its location from the civilized world. While more on a folkloric level, this sort of gloss of Quranic verses reflects the extensive *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī in the ninth century. 'Umāra even includes the isnad: 'Umāra said Isḥāq ibn Bashr on the authority of Jabīr [?] on the authority of al-Ḍaḥḥak on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās told us ... and so on (22v).

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[16] Probably refers to Afschachīd, son of Noah. See Friedlaender, p. 175.

[17] See also *QDh* p.127: “O Afshakhir! You are the most knowlegeable person on earth! And you are the most knowledgeable person of your time since what you say is comparable to what the angels say!”

[18] A Darkness on earth is mentioned in the Budge’s Syriac version, but only in passing: “the darkness was so dense that the troops were unable to see one another” (p.132).

After the *tafsīr* of Quran 18:92-97, followed by an interpolated hadith, the narrator returns to the story of Alexander: 'Umāra said: I returned to the hadith of Dhulqarnayn (24v). When he had finished the two barriers, he wanted to go to the land of Babel (24v). On the way he came across a Utopian society.[19] Since it was his custom to enter each city alone to explore it before undertaking its conquest, he slipped into the city by himself. In mentioning this custom of Alexander's, 'Umāra shows that he is familiar with the whole of the text that he is relating, including those episodes that have not yet occurred in his narrative, because he assumes a disguise to enter the courts of the king of China and the queen of Zamira much later in the narrative than the Utopian society.[20] 'Umāra may have gone through a process of gathering material, organizing it, making an outline, and then writing, which points to more than a mere act of translation.

In addition to providing knowledge about how to conquer a given people, the technique of the anonymous hero allows the narrator to introduce anecdotal material. For example, during Alexander's walk through the land of Utopia, the narrator weaves a legend apparently from Jewish tradition[21] also found in *QDh*. It concerns two farmers, one that has sold land to the other, and the new owner finds treasure on the land, and urges the seller to take it back. But he refuses and they must go before a magistrate, who decides that the son of the one will marry the daughter of the other, and that the new couple will receive the treasure.[22] The episode may serve to show that there is a sense of justice superior to that of Dhulqarnayn, possessed by those who have abandoned wealth and ambition, such as Utopians.

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[19] See M. Casari, *Alessandro e Utopia nei romanzi persiani medievali*, Rome, 1999.

[20] He does not enter Darius's court in disguise as he does in some versions of the PC in which he steals a cup. See Pritchard, ed., *The History of Alexander's Battles*, pp.58-61.

[21] From Saskia Dönitz, "The Jewish Alexander" in *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. Zuwiyya, forthcoming. See the Palestinian Talmud, tractate Babah Metziah 2:5 (8c); see also the versions in Genesis Rabbah 33.1; Leviticus Rabbah 27.1; Pesiqta de Rav Kahana 9.24; Midrash Tanhuma, Emor 6; Yalqut Shimoni, Ps 36, section 727; see also Israel J. Kazis, *The Book of the Gests of Alexander of Macedon* (Cambridge Mass., 1962), pp. 20–23.

[22] Compare to *QDh*, p.157.

The resolution of the unusual case leads into a discussion between Alexander and the inhabitants, who appear to be the Arabic rendition of the Gymnosophists. The dialogue between Alexander and the Gymnosophists in ‘Umāra is not of particular interest because it is perfectly typical of the group of Arabic Alexander romances. However, one small detail merits a remark. At the conclusion, Alexander tells the Gymnosophists about the Darkness containing the Water of Life, which lies beyond them. They warn him to heed God’s decree (“amr allah”). But then, without transition, without so much as even the isnad that so often introduces a new episodic cycle, the ms. launches full force into the Persian Campaign. It is as if the Persian material were inserted at random at this point, when originally the Darkness episode was meant to follow.[23] And this material from the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* (*PC*) core, including campaigns against Darius, Porus and the conversation with the Brahmans, spans the next 40 folios of the manuscript. After this interpolation from the *PC*, ‘Umāra returns to Islamic legends without leaving the slightest seam.

Beyond the Brahmans in the far east, Alexander seeks the earthly Paradise, a commonplace in the Arabic Alexander traditon, perhaps of Jewish origin. He says that the mountain onto which Adam fell is surrounded by giant snakes. Alexander sees in a dream that he cannot climb the mountain. But he finds the valley of the earthly paradise, with its fruit, aromatic trees, ice cold springs, and jewels. After traversing the earthly Paradise he comes back to the edge of the Darkness (46r-47r).

It appears that ‘Umāra repeats the Darkness episode because from a geographical perspective, Alexander must traverse the Darkness twice, once on the way in and once on the way out. The repetition is preceded by a long isnad that reaches back to Ibn ‘Abbās (47v).[24] The narrator is quite conscious of the fact that he has previously told the episode of the Darkness: He says that “When Dhulqarnayn reached the limits of the Darkness for the second time” (f.47v; trans. mine).[25] The hero’s motive is still to drink from the Water of Life, despite the fact that Khidr admonishes him that finding the well depends entirely on the will of God. He also ignores the scolding that he received earlier from the Angel of the Mountain for trespassing beyond the bounds of mankind’s domain. The second crossing of the Darkness permits ‘Umāra the chance to incorporate some of the motifs omitted in the first telling: the angel Rafael answering Dhulqarnayn’s questions concerning the nature of the Darkness, Khidr carrying the stone high on the lance, the soldiers using call and response to stay together, the expanding and contracting bird, the conversation with the Angel of the Horn, the magic stone that weighs an infinite amount yet less than a handful of dust. The only repetition from the first telling of the Darkness is the hadith about the jewels at the river bottom: he who gathers will regret and he who chooses not to gather also regrets. This repetition may suggest that as ‘Umāra compiled his *Qiṣṣa al-Iskandar* from different sources, he included from one source a version of the Darkness and then later decided to include more material from a second version. Wishing to integrate the second version into the narrative, he says the hero went not once but twice into the Darkness. However, he omitted to remove at least one overlapping part, namely the jewel-bottom river at the exit of the Darkness.

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[23] In the *Rrek.*, after the dialogue with the Gymnosophists, comes the Land of Darkness (actually four folios later with the mediation of the Gog and Magog, the arrival at Jabalqa, and the Çunchubias snakes lying just outside the earthly Paradise). Thus, except for the interpolated Persian, Indian, Brahman material in ‘Umāra, the *Rrek.* and ‘Umāra follow a similar scheme.

[24] In the *Rrek.*, the source given is Abū ‘Abd al-Malik on the authority of Muqātil b. Sulayman, p. 485. *QDh* gives Abū ‘Abd al-Malik as the source, p.129.

[25] Again on 48r he refers to Dhulqarnayn’s second trip to the Darkness.

With regard to the hadith concerning the parallel with Solomon that comes on the heels of the Darkness episode,[26] both *HD* and ‘Umāra include a comparison between the two kings, spurred on by a question-poser asking “Who was greater, Solomon, son of David, or Dhulqarnayn?” The Prophet responds that they were equal and then enters into a lengthy discussion of each of their merits. The interpolation of this material shows the author’s attempt to demonstrate the breadth of his knowledge concerning Dhulqarnayn in the hadith tradition. He seeks to include everything that his sources offer and cites all of them by name with their isnad. It is noteworthy that neither *Qdh* nor the *Rrek.* include this comparison.[27]

The remaining thirty or so folios include Dhulqarnayn’s visit to China and an assortment of Islamic legends mixed with *PC* material. Of the *PC* material, what most calls attention is the abrupt switch to the first person narrator during the relation of the Wonders of the East (55v) and the just as abrupt return to the third person on 58r. Considering the fact that this material is also narrated in first person in *QDh*, *HD*, and the *Rrek.*, it would seem that this part of the Arabic romance stems from a corrupt written

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[26] See the study of M. Abumalham “Salomón y los genios” in *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes* 3 (1992): 37-46, in which she discusses the topic of comparison between Alexander/Dhulqarnayn and Solomon.

[27] Compare other references to Solomon in Arabic Alexander literature in Doufikar-Aerts 222-224.

Alexander tradition of the letter of Alexander to Aristotle concerning the wonders of India.

Of the episodes that do not belong to the *PC* tradition are Alexander's long conversation with the Angel of the Sea (69v-71r),[28] which complements his previous conversation with the Angel of the Mountain. This episode is found in *HD*, but not in the *Rrek.* or *QDh*. God grants Dhulqarnayn's wish to see the wonders of the sea and Dhulqarnayn orders a boat be made and a special coffer ("tābūt") placed inside. He sails to the end of the sea, says goodbye to his men, and descends into the depths of the waters. In both *HD* and 'Umāra, Dhulqarnayn's vessel is tossed by the waves until it becomes thin as an eggshell, about to burst open and drown Dhulqarnayn.[29] After this significant common detail, 'Umāra is decidedly more ascetic than in *HD*, as the angel lectures Dhulqarnayn on what God expects of him, including shedding his arrogance and helping the poor (f.70v). It could be that 'Umāra is purifying the hero for his next episode, which he sets up with the title "Hadith concerning the entrance of Iskandar into Makka from Yemen and his meeting with Ibrahim, God's friend, bless him" (71r; trans. mine). The hadith is transmitted on the authority of al-Musayib. Dhulqarnayn enters Makka and meets Ismael and Ibrahim. Ibrahim takes him to the temple where he leaves his men behind, enters, and comes out a hajj (71v). In this state the hero is now spiritually prepared to die.

As hajj, Alexander goes to Babel to subdue Nemrod, King of Persia, which he does successfully. In Iraq, he receives a letter from his mother, Ruqīa, in which she requests that her son send his treasures to her on horseback. Alexander reads the letter to his wisemen and none of them understands the meaning of her strange request ("ta'wīlihi"; 74r). The masses of treasure are more than one thousand horses could carry. So he tells his scribe to write the names of all the cities he has conquered and the treasures that he was unable to carry off, together with the exact location of each treasure, and to send the letter on horseback to his mother.[30] In this way, Alexander and his mother outsmart the wisemen of Alexander's court. 'Umāra has this material in common with *QDh*, but not with the *Rrek.* or *HD*. The securing of his material wealth by leaving everything written down for his mother further shows that the hero is prepared for death and that his death in the end will be as exemplary as his life.

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[28] Compare with the "Expedición submarina" in *HD* in which Dhulqarnayn descends in a sort of chest or trunk "cofre" and meets the Ángel of the Sea (pp. 58-61).

[29] Umara says he's been gone for 27 years (70r). While HD says it is 70 years (p.61), diferent, but both include number 7.

[30] See also Mubashshir p.595, and Ibn al-Jawzī (f.84r) where the same episode is mentioned.

The end of 'Umāra's text is presented as another in a string of hadith: "the hadith of Alexander when his last day was imminent and the hadith of Qaydār, king of India" (74v; trans. mine).[31] Alexander's last campaign is a return to India where he seeks to conquer the lands of Qaydār.[32] But the Indian king has embraced philosophy and avoids the destruction of his lands by offering Dhulqarnayn his beautiful daughter, along with a stone from which his men can drink so as never to become sick, as well as a philosopher, and a personal physician.[33] Qaydār has identified Alexander's desires, these being the pleasures of youth, the power that comes from healthy troops, the secrets of the universe, and the extension of life through medicine. Alexander accepts and leaves Qaydār in peace after saying that he was very impressed with the sophistication of Indian medicine. However, shortly thereafter, back in Babel, he is overcome with the recurrence of a disease called *sulāl*, which may refer to consumption. Before dying, he writes to his mother using the language of the second of the famous letters, being the more poetic one "let the sky cry for its stars, the oceans for their whales, the earth for its children," etc. (80v; trans. mine). His coffin is taken to Alexandria. Following the end of *Hadith al-Iskandar* in the ms., the story of the Boys of the Cave, also from Quran 82:8-25, begins immediately, which helps to further contextualize Alexander's story within the broad genre of Quranic commentary.

It has been impossible to examine here all the episodes in 'Umāra's 160 ms. pages of dense legends. This task will be more feasible once there is an edition of his work. However, one can reach certain provisional conclusions from the selections offered.

One identifies in 'Umāra's text a body of episodes including Jābarsā and Jābalqā, Gog and Magog, the Expeditions to Mount Qāf and to the Darkness, among others, comprising more than half of the text that are outside of what one associates with the *PC* tradition. One recognizes that some of this material is found in pseudo-Jacob of Seruj's Syriac Metrical Discourse, but Seruj's text cannot be a source for more than a small part of the Arabic legend. It is noteworthy that all of this material is common to all of the four

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[31] He appears in Mas'ūdī as Kand, ed. *Praires d'or*, vol.2, p. 260. But the details are different.

[32] A similar name appears as Kedar in the Old Testament. See Isaiah (42:11)

[33] Of the four gifts promised, only three are enumerated, the last or fourth was omitted. A physician (ṭabīb) must have been intended because he arrives on the heels of the philosopher before any illness arises (78v).

Arabic texts. One could argue that these episodes form the core of the Arabic Alexander Romance and that the *PC* is only one of many sources consulted, and that when used it is often blended, scrambled, and modified to fit the Arabic material, not the other way around. In other words, the Arabic legendary material is not necessarily adapted to fit the scheme of the *PC*, but rather the *PC* is molded to the core of the Arabic romance, which is why it is not clear that one should insist on their being an original Arabic translation of the *PC*.

Umāra's Arabic Alexander Romance is organized around the Quranic figure of Dhulqarnayn. While it incorporates some of the episodes of the Greek *PC*, these are put to the service of Islamic purposes, namely to explain who is the figure of Dhulqarnayn mentioned in the Quran and what are his feats. Towards this end, the Introduction covers his origin and youth. He was apparently the son of an older woman who had only one offspring.[34] His mother was Ruqīa and his father Qīlaqūs, a corruption of Philip. His teacher was Aristotle. In a twist quite distinct from the *PC* tradition, upon receiving revelation, and spreading the word of Islam, Alexander's own people murder him and God revives him (4r-v).[35] Then his mother gives him a book relating the wonders of the world, which includes the Water of Life. This is the same book mentioned in the *Rrek.* and *QDh*. His departure from his homeland then, is not to defeat Darius as is the underlying motive for the *PC* tradition, but a quest for immortality (5r-v). To further define the hero, more than a little attention is given to designing miracles for Alexander/Dhulqarnayn that repeat or prefigure miracles of other prophets, such as walking on water and resucitation after death, recalling Jesus, commanding the elements of wind and light, like King Solomon, flying into the heavens with an angel,[36] such as Muhammad.

Along these same lines, material from the Greek Alexander tradition is frequently reinterpreted: Diogenes is said to be wise because he is a descendant of the Islamic prophet Hūd. Alexandria is built and a plaque is placed on its door that prophecises the coming rule of Muhammad and Islam. Alexander's celestial journey is recast with an angel in place of the griffins, and its purpose is to give the hero a mission to convert all the peoples of the earth from east to west.

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[34] Comparing this Introduction to that of Dinawarī's ninth-century version, which according to Macuch (p. 228) was the first to show Iranian influence, suggests that this introduction is not Persian. Ṭabarī's version appears in the SUNY Edition, ed. M. Perlmann, vol. 4, *The Ancient Kingdoms*, p.88ff.

[35] This episode is also transmitted by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr*.

[36] Or riding the Alborak, as mentioned in *QDh*, p.80.

These and other episodes are presented as a series of hadith strung together and interspersed with commentary on Quranic verses that seek to flush out the fragmentary allusions in the Quran with details from legends of Arabian origin, Judeo-Christian origin, wisdom literature, or miscellaneous geographical knowledge of the ancient world, particularly concerning the division of the earth.[37] Chains of transmission are frequently provided, usually reaching back to the seventh and eighth centuries and to transmitters who have some connection to Judeo-Christian material. By inserting the hadith in a larger structure, ‘Umāra gives a deeper meaning to each individual hadith, such as Alexander’s eschatological role in God’s plan by virtue of the Gog and Magog commentary, or Alexander as a type for prophets to come, as he bears the stone of prophecy inherited from Adam and used to illuminate the Darkness, or more globally, Alexander’s empire as a prefiguration of the Islamic Empire, or the hadith in which Alexander performs the ritual ablutions at the Kaaba in Mecca, which serves as proof that the message of Islam had always been present on earth.

Umāra’a text is, in part, a transmission based on written sources, as shown by the abrupt change to first person narrative it shares with *HD*, *QDh*, and *Rrek*. But also, it seems to be based on oral tradition as so often we read *qāla* so and so [so and so said], usually without reference to a written source. At times, it seems like ‘Umāra is demonstrating his high level of scholarship by passing on what he learned from a myriad of scholars, which for western readers produces some unwanted repetition of parts of episodes, rather than advancing a plot, but this is part of the technique used to gain the respect of the readers by showing that he is well-informed. Certainly, as an eighth-century author, much of this information would have come orally.

Finally, one gleans from the conclusion concerning the mysterious dreams, and Dhulqarnayn’s death from the disease called *sulāl* that this part has a tone not in keeping with the rest of the work, and that it could possibly represent a modification of the text at much later date, perhaps the 16th century when the scribe “copied” the text.

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[37] See Zuwiyya, 2005, for the earth’s division in climes, as an organization scheme for the *Rrek*.

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Al-Tabari's Tales of Alexander: History and Romance

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In his *History of Prophets and Kings,* better known as *History of Al-Tabari,* Al-Tabari has devoted a chapter to the tale of Darius the Great and Darius the Younger.[1] As it turned out, however, the main character in this chapter became Alexander the Great, and the main topic was his conquest of Persia.[2] Since Al-Tabari has obviously taken the chance to retell some of the stories which he knew about the Greek conqueror and about his deeds in Persia and the east, the chapter thus ended up as a description of the end of the Achaemenid dynasty and of the role of Alexander in these events. This fact in itself provides us, as we shall see, with some insights about the nature of his sources and the limits of his knowledge of the events and topics which he narrates in his history. Since Al-Tabari includes four versions of the story of Alexander with the last Achaemenid king, whom he refers to as Darius the Younger, I shall begin by giving an outline of these stories; then, arguing that they belong primarily to the world of Romance, I shall discuss the main themes of these stories trying to explain how they were used to emphasize certain important goals of the narrative. Finally I shall attempt to locate these stories within the context of the historical development of the Alexander Romance both in the Persian and in the Arab worlds of the late third and early fourth AH/AD ninth and tenth centuries.

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[1] There are several editions of this history; see Faustina Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus,* Paris-Leuven, 2010, 22-3 with notes 35-7. It is more famous in western literature as the *Annales of Al-Tabari*, as noted by D.M. Dunlop, *Arab Civilization to AD 1500,* London, 1971, 88-9. See also Boaz Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Tabari's History,* Leiden, 2004, xxvi-xxvii.

[2] See Paul Weinfield, *The Islamic Alexander: A Religious and Political Theme in Arabic and Persian Literature,* Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University, 2008, 4, 11.

Tales of Alexander in Al-Tabari's History

In the first and most historical story, which Al-Tabari attributes to the famous Arab historian Hisham bin Muhammad, he says that after Darius son of Ardashir ruled Darius son of Darius for fourteen years.[3] Since Darius mistreated his people and killed many of their nobles, when Alexander invaded the Persian kingdom they were willing to help him against their own king and to take Alexander's side.[4] After that the two kings met in the land of the island "*Bilad-ul-jazeerah*", *i.e.* Mesopotamia, and fought for a year. Then some followers of Darius killed him, and brought his head to Alexander who ordered them to be executed, saying that this was a fair retribution to whoever dared to mistreat his king. Alexander then married Darius's daughter, Roxane, and led campaigns against India and the eastern lands. He died on his way back to Alexandria and his body was taken to this city in a gold sarcophagus. His reign lasted fourteen years and the rule of the *Rūm* became united after having been formerly scattered before Alexander, and the rule of Persia scattered after having been formerly united before Alexander.[5]

The source of the second and more detailed story is vaguely defined as "other people than Hisham." Here we are told that when Darius son of Darius came to the throne, Alexander's Greek father, Filfus,[6] was a king over Macedon and used to send Darius a tribute (*kharaj*) every year. After he died, Alexander assumed the throne and did not send the usual tribute, and so Darius became angry at him. Darius, however, sent a message rebuking him and, noticing his young age, he sent to him a scepter, a ball and a bag of sesame. He furthermore reminded Alexander of his young age and told him that he should play with the scepter and the ball rather than assume kingship. Should Alexander not follow his advice, he would send someone to bring him in chains. Darius ended his message by remarking that his soldiers were like sesame in their number.

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[3] Hisham ibn Muhammad, known as Al-Kalbi (d. 204/819), was famous for his writings on the ancient history of the Arabs and their genealogies; see Dunlop, *Arab Civilization,* 80.

[4] Al-Tabari uses the form of the name which is common in Arabic and Persian, Al-Iskandar, and uses also Rowshank for Roxane. I have chosen here to adopt the Latinized forms of the names which are more common.

[5] Al-Tabari uses here the word which most medieval Arab historians used in referring to the Greeks and the Romans alike, *The Rūm*. On the use of this word in Arab sources, see M. Martin, "*Rūm* in the Works of Three Spanish Muslim Geographers," *Graeco-Arabica: First International Congress on Greek and Arabic Studies,* Athens, 1984, 109-117 and cf. Richard Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend,* New Haven and London, 2008, 24.

[6] The way this name (referred to sometimes by other writers as Filcus and Pilpus) and many other Greek and Roman names were written in medieval Arab manuscripts reflects, in part, the difficulty which the authors and the copyists were facing while trying to read and write foreign names following a system which writes mainly in consonants.

Alexander's response to this message was no less defiant. He told Darius that he understood it well and that he was on the contrary pleased to receive it. In return for this present, Alexander sent to Darius a bag of mustard (*khardal*) telling him that his own soldiers were no less numerous than Darius's and yet they were even much stronger and bitterer than this plant. The two kings then met each other and fought. When it became apparent that Darius was going to loose the battle, two men from his guard stabbed him from behind. They wanted by stabbing him to be favored by Alexander whose orders were that Darius should be taken hostage and not be killed. When Alexander was told about Darius's murder, he walked to him and found him still alive. Alexander then told Darius that he did not intend to kill him and asked him about his last wish, promising to fulfill it. Darius said that he wanted two things from Alexander: the first, to take revenge from the two men who killed him; the second to marry his daughter. Alexander then fulfilled his promise by ordering the two men who killed Darius to be crucified and married Roxane. As if to illustrate the reversal of fortune of the rulers of the two kingdoms, Al-Tabari tells us that Alexander then reigned Darius's empire and the latter's rule became his.

Like the preceding story, the third one begins with a vague reference to its source. Although his reference to "some knowledgeable people of the histories of the predecessors" does not tell us much about the source, it is interesting to note that Al-Tabari introduces this version by a verb (*zaʿama*), meaning "claimed," which indicates that he himself probably did not believe at least in some of its details.[7] According to this story, Alexander was Darius's younger brother since Darius the Great married his mother, Helai or Helaia.[8] Darius the Great, however, did not like the smell of her mouth and sought to treat her. When treatment failed, he sent her back to her family; but by then she was pregnant with Alexander.[9]

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[7] Compared with the first story where he says "I was told" (*huddithtu*) and the second where he says that "someone mentioned" (*zakara*).

[8] See Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus,* 19, who notes that in a 'Persian' variant of the romance the name of the daughter is Nāhīd.

[9] The story notes that a plant known in Persian as *sandar* was used in her treatment and it explains the name of *Al-Iskandaros* as a combination of the names of his mother and of the tree! On the possibility that this plant was garlic, see Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend,* 25, who rightly questions its use to treat bad breath.

When Darius the Younger assumed the throne, he sent to Alexander asking him to speed up paying the tribute and threatening to fight him if he declined. Alexander responded by saying that he slaughtered the hen which laid the golden eggs and ate her meat, and gave Darius the choice between peace and war. So, Darius sought to fight Alexander who plotted with two courtiers of Darius to kill him. When the two kings met in battle the two men stabbed Darius and Alexander found him in his last minute. The encounter between the dying king and Alexander is elaborately pictured and is somewhat more dramatic than the previous version. Alexander is said to have treated Darius compassionately and to have absolved himself from this murder, saying: "It is your two courtiers who killed you. I would not have wished it for you, noble of nobles, and freest of free, and king of kings, to meet this end." When the two murderers came to Alexander, he gave them what he promised and ordered them to be killed since in no way should killers of kings be spared unless they made it a vow that should not to be disregarded.

The final version of Darius's tales with Alexander, like the second one, is attributed to some unknown authority. Here we are told that "some of them mention" that the king of the *Rūm* used to pay tribute to the Persians. After he died, Alexander who was a man of will, power, and cunning, became king and made some conquests in the west. Having become powerful, he refused to pay the tribute. Darius became angry and wrote to him strong letters. Since their relationship got worse; they marched against each other and met at the borders. In the beginning they exchanged messages. Alexander was afraid of fighting Darius and asked to conclude a treaty with him. Al-Tabari notes a disagreement among historians concerning the place of the battle in which Alexander was riding a wonderful mare called "Boukfrasb." It was also said that a Persian fighter managed to penetrate the lines of the Greek soldiers and badly wounded Alexander. As for Darius, who was hated by some of his followers, he was stabbed by two men from his personal guard. They are said to have collaborated with Alexander.

When Alexander knew of what happened, he went to Darius in some of his own soldiers. Again, this story includes some dramatic details of the encounter between Alexander and the dying king whom he found in his last moment. He talked to him lovingly, put his head in his lap, and wept over him. Alexander then said to him: "Ask me whatever you want since I am mindful of our relationship."[10] He furthermore assured Darius that he was not responsible for his death. So, when the two men who killed Darius came to take their reward, he ordered their heads to be cut and crucified them.

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[10] Al-Tabari shows here his doubt of the relationship which makes Alexander a distant relative of Darius. He again uses the verb *za'ama*.

Al-Tabari ends his tales by some remarks about the children of Darius and the length of his rule and with some pieces of information about the deeds of Alexander which obviously did not fit in his narrative of the encounters between him and Darius. He also attributes to "some" historians their saying that the tribute which Alexander's father was paying to the Persian kings was golden eggs. This addendum obviously explains why Alexander told Darius that he slaughtered the hen which laid these eggs. Furthermore, nothing in Al-Tabari's chapter indicates clearly that he preferred a particular story. We can probably assume that he might have believed in Hisham's story more than the others because it was mentioned first and its report might have seemed to him more trustworthy.[11] The verbs which he uses in introducing his stories, as I have pointed out, may indeed reflect his views regarding the subject. None of these points, however, is conclusive and it is equally likely that Al-Tabari was well aware that it was no longer possible to retell a true and faithful story of the events which he was narrating.

Compared with these stories of Darius and Alexander in Al-Tabari, which flatly contradict all that we know from the historical sources, there is, for example, the narrative of the authoritative work on Alexander's campaigns, by Arrian who sought to save what he thought to be the authentic record of the events from the growing romance stories looming around the historical figure.[12] The facts can thus be simply stated: when Alexander found Darius the latter was already dead. Nothing can be said about the will. The relationship between Alexander and Darius is furthermore as unhistorical as the relationship between Darius and his alleged daughter, Roxane. Moreover, since he makes this Persian king a son of Darius the Great who lived almost a century and a half before him, it is evident that Al-Tabari had no sense of chronology and a faint knowledge of the sequence of the rulers of the dynasty as well. Therefore, in studying the tales about Alexander in the *History* of Al-Tabari, we have ironically to resort to the world of *Ro-*

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[11] There was only one generation between him and Al-Kalbi; a fact which, according to the methodology of the students of the prophet's traditions, may give credit to the story.

[12] Arrian 3.21.10-22.2, 29.7-30.5. (particularly on the scene of Alexander's death). For a brief and authoritative discussion of the events surrounding his death see E. Badian, "Conspiracies," in *Alexander the Great in Fact and in Fiction,* ed. by A.B. Bosworth and E.J. Baynham, Oxford, 2000, 84-8.

mance, and we have, moreover, to resort to different criteria to understand them properly.[13]

The Romance Themes in Al-Tabari's Stories

To classify Al-Tabari's history of Alexander as belonging mainly to the realm of Romance, we are helped by some recurrent themes which figure prominently in three of his stories.[14] These themes are the alleged brotherhood between Alexander and Darius, Alexander's 'character' or 'persona', Darius's death scene and the symbolic exchange of gifts between the two kings. While some of these elements, such as the gifts, serve primarily to dramatically highlight the events and to prepare the reader for the encounter between the two kings, the purpose of the others was to legitimize Alexander's rule over Persia which he earned by conquest. Another point to consider in the stories is that they belong to different trends and are far from unanimous on certain issues.[15] Variations did exist and they were either considerable bearing upon, for example, the nature of the relationship between the two kings and Alexander's character and his role in Darius's death, or they were minor differences, as in the fate of the hen laying golden eggs, or in the place and number of the encounters between Darius and Alexander.

To begin with the alleged brotherhood between the two kings, it can be easily observed that Al-Tabari had before him two different traditions. According to one of them, Alexander was Darius's brother through their father Darius the Great who married Alexander's mother but divorced her because of her bad smell, or at least he was a distant relation to him. That this tradition seemed incredible to Al-Tabari is only implied by a later statement in which he says that the *Rūm* and many genealogists say that Alexander was son of ‘Filfus’.[16] Although Alexander’s brotherhood to Darius belongs to the romance, its symbolic connotations cannot be neglected. His mother may indeed be a foreigner and he may have lived all his life abroad with her, but he was after all a son of Darius the Great and was entitled to claim his father’s throne; in other words he was a “legitimate king” and not “an invader.”[17] According to these stories the theme of brotherhood may thus be considered a “patriotic motive” to make Alexander an accepted successor for the subjects who were mistreated by Darius and who were hoping to get rid of him.[18]

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[13] Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend,* 2-3. See also Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus,* 20, note 26: "The Arab historians' stories about Alexander are . . . as 'historical' as the Alexander Romance."

[14] I am concentrating here on themes which figure prominently in the tales. Al-Tabari gives some passing remarks to other romance elements in the addenda to his stories; see the framework of the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition as outlined by Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus,* 29-20; and her reference to Al-Tabari, 23.

[15] Minoo S. Southgate, "Portrait of Alexander in Persian Alexander-Romance of the Islamic Era," *JAOS,* 97 (1977), 279.

Darius’s death scene figures prominently in three of Al-Tabari’s four stories of Alexander and Darius and provides us with a complementary theme to the preceding one. It is clearly stated in these stories that Alexander found him in his last moment. The two kings had however the chance to talk to each other: Alexander absolving himself from the guilt of killing his brother and Darius saying his last wish. The dramatic importance of this episode to the story is echoed in later medieval literature and manuscripts of the story of Alexander and Darius which include pictures of the dying king and of Alexander together with the murderers.[19] Whether verbally expressed or graphically drawn in a picture, the purpose of the whole episode is obvious: to establish Alexander as a legitimate ruler of Persia by making him a lawful heir of Darius. This goal is achieved through washing away the notion of the Greek king as an invader and a conqueror. Moreover, if absolving Alexander from Darius’s blood was merely a step towards achieving this goal, his right to succeed the deceased king to the throne was further established by the will. According to this will, the right to avenge Darius fell solely upon Alexander who was also to marry his alleged daughter Roxane.[20] By doing these things, and by treating the nobles of Persia honorably (again according to the will of Darius), Alexander could assume the image of a lawful Persian ruler and could simultaneously confirm his right to rule the deceased king’s empire.[21]

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[16] It is noteworthy that Al-Tabari’s puts this view before other suggestions; he then adds that some say the variant Pilpus.

[17] Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend,* 26.

[18] Southgate, *Portrait of Alexander,* 280.

[19] Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend,* 28.

[20] The marriage took place almost three years after Darius’s death, but the stories do not pay much attention to chronology. Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend,* 28.

[21] Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon 356-323 B.C.: A Historical Biography,* Berkeley, 1991, 329 notes the practical motives of Alexander in doing these things.

The third theme to consider is Alexander's character in the stories. We have here also two pictures of the Greek leader going back to two different traditions; according to one of them Alexander is wise and good, according to the other he is cunning and evil. The good character of Alexander is stressed not only in several ways but it is also reflected in more than one version of the stories. First of all his intelligence is manifested by his ability to decipher the Darius's gift to his own advantage and to answer it in a proper way that shows his defiance and reflects his strong personality. The comparison between Darius's and Alexander's characters is put forward in straightforward clear adjectives that put them one against the other. Darius's inexperience, rashness, hatred, and tyranny which are lumped together in one sentence in the introduction to the tales are countered by Alexander's firm will, power and cunning which are all stressed in the final tale.[22]

More important still in outlining Alexander's character in Al-Tabari's stories is his role in Darius's death. According to one view which accords with Arrian's description of the event, Alexander had no role in the plot. The initiative to kill the Persian king came from his own men and upon them solely rests the whole blame and responsibility. Their intentions, according to the second tale in Al-Tabari, might have been to get some rewards from Alexander. But, since he killed them, he appears as the *good* Alexander who took revenge for the murdered king and the whole episode serves as well to legitimize his accession to the throne.

The other view, however, casts some shadows on the role of Alexander and presents us with a bad image of him particularly because he was accused in this case of plotting against his brother. According to these stories, there occurred some contact between Alexander and Darius's murderers. The stories do not detail the nature of their rewards nor how or when the contact between them and Alexander took place. The emphasis was rather on their end and on how they were tricked by Alexander who, despite the service they did to him, ordered them to be killed. It is important, moreover, to note the general tendency in the tales to absolve Alexander from the guilt of killing his brother. According to one story, Alexander killed the two men because they did not make a point of preserving their lives; according to another, they were killed because they dared to attack their king and cheated their own people. In two of the stories it is emphasized that the murderers were even crucified after having been killed.[23]

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[22] Al-Tabari describes Darius saying that he was "*shabban gharran hamiyyan haqudan jabbaran.*" As for Alexander, he was "*rajulan za hazmen wa quwaten wa makren.*" See also Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography,* 149, where he notices that Al-Tabari's history provides us with "raw data for personality analysis." Although he limits the observation to the anecdotes, the intended contrast here between Alexander's and Darius's personalities cannot be mistaken. Weinfield, *The Islamic Alexander,* 61, notes that "Al-Tabari's depiction of Alexander as prideful and Dārā as unjust to his people colors his account of the end of Dārā's reign and life."

Further glimpses of the bad image of Alexander are given in the addendum to the stories of the encounters between Alexander and Darius. Here we have a passing reference to Alexander's destruction of Persian cities, fortifications and temples. Alexander was also accused of killing Persian priests and of burning their religious books and Darius's court. He is also said to have carried Persian books and sciences of astronomy and of wisdom after he had them translated them into Syriac and Greek (*Rūmiyya*) languages. Although Al-Tabari does not specify the source of these glimpses, it is not difficult to attribute it to a Zoroastrian Persian source which continued to see in Alexander the invader and the conqueror.[24] Indeed, later representations of this bad image are found in some famous Persian epic works.[25]

The exchange of messages and gifts between Alexander and Darius constitutes another romance theme in three of the four stories but details of the contents of these messages are found only in two of them. In the last tale, it is stated briefly that when Alexander stopped sending the tribute to Darius, the latter became angry and wrote to Alexander strong letters (*kutuban ʿaneefatan*). Alexander accordingly felt afraid and sent to Darius seeking to restore peace between them. The second and the third stories contain more details concerning the contents of the letters. In the second, Darius sends Alexander a message accompanied by a gift of three items: a scepter, a ball and some sesame. The purpose of the gift is openly stated in the reference to Alexander's young age: he should play with the ball and the scepter and should not think of fighting. The goal of the letter was, however, frustrated, by the way Alexander looked at the gift. He told Darius that he was pleased to receive the gift since Darius threw the ball which signified to him the earth to the scepter (*i.e.* rule) which Alexander held under his control. The third tale is similar to the second in its use of symbols in Alexander's reply. It states simply that Darius sent a letter to Alexander asking him to speed up paying the usual tribute and threatening to fight him in case he declined. In his reply to Darius, Alexander told him that he slaughtered the hen, ate its meat and nothing was left of it except the extremities.[26] He also gave Darius the choice between war and peace and told him that he was equally ready for both.

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[23] Cf. the references to the fate of the assassins in Plutarch, *Life of Alexander,* 43.6 and Quintus Curtius Rufus 7.5.36, 40-1, 43. See also Ernst Fredricksmeyer, "Alexander and the Kingship of Asia," in *Alexander the Great in Fact and in Fiction,* ed. by A.B. Bosworth and E.J. Baynham, Oxford, 2000, 153.

[24] Southgate, *Portrait of Alexander,* 278 and Weinfield, *The Islamic Alexander,* 23, 42-3, 47. See also the last section of this article on Al-Tabari's methodology.

[25] Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend,* 35, 41.

While we know that an exchange of letters took place between Alexander and Darius following the battle of Issus, the historical facts are different from the narratives of Al-Tabari. It is fairly certain that it was Darius who sent asking to negotiate with Alexander.[27] Moreover, the allusions to the gifts and the symbolic reference to the tale of the goose (here the hen!) that laid golden eggs belong ultimately to the realm of romance.[28] As far as Al-Tabari's tales are concerned, they justify his notion about Darius as a rash tyrannical ruler while introducing Alexander as an intelligent powerful king, despite his young age.

Al-Tabari's Tales in Context

In attempting to assess the value of Al-Tabari's tales of Alexander, we need to consider several issues which include the points of his time and his world (geographically and culturally speaking) and his methodology and sources. To begin with Al-Tabari's time, it may be summarily noted that he was one of the great Arab historians of the third and fourth AH/AD ninth and the tenth centuries.[29] Thus, he precedes the epic poem of Firdausi with almost a century. He also precedes the fourth/tenth century historians, Al-Masʿudi and Al-Thaʿalibi, but belongs almost to the same era as Al-Yaʿqubi and Al-Dinawari.[30] All these historians wrote in Arabic and were influenced by the great movement of translation into Arabic, but they also geographically belonged to different worlds which were then newly united.

Second, Al-Tabari got hold of the cultures of two worlds: the Persian, where he was born, grew up and spent the first half of his life; and the Arab world to which he owes his name and origin and where he spent the second half of his life.[31] Thus, owing to his knowledge of the Persian language,[32] he may be considered the first Arab historian to have had a real access to historical material concerning ancient Persian history that was not previously known to Arab historians. The point becomes clear when we compare the first tale with the remaining three tales.

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[26] Which is to be taken as an insult, adding to the defiant tone of the letter.

[27] Green, *Alexander of Macedon,* 240-1.

[28] Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend,* 26.

[29] Al-Tabari lived between 224-310AH/AD839-923. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus,* 20; Dunlop, *Arab Civilization,* 89.

[30] For the place of Al-Tabari within medieval Arabic historiography on Alexander, see Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus,* 21-9; Weinfield, *The Islamic Alexander,* 33-69 and Dunlop, *Arab Civilization,* 71-117.

As for Al-Tabari's methodology in writing his *History*, the first point to note is that it is different from his methodology in his *Tafsīr*.[33] In the history he was satisfied in general, as he himself states clearly in the introduction to his *History*, to tell us the stories without expressing his opinion and left it for the reader to determine what he wants to accept. Thanks to this approach, we know from his history more than one point of view on certain issues and, in this regard, he is certainly more instructive than other medieval Arab historians. He might have abridged or summarized some details of the stories which he wrote about Darius and Alexander, but he has given what he thought to be a fair representation of the important issues of these stories.[34]

Then comes the question of Al-Tabari's sources for his tales about Alexander and Darius. As has been noted, except for the first tale, Al-Tabari has not specified clearly the sources of the other tales. The third one he attributes to "some knowledgeable people of the histories of the predecessors"; but the second and the fourth stories are respectively introduced by the two vague expressions: "other people mentioned…" and "some of them mentioned…." Fortunately, however, Al-Tabari has appended to his stories some pieces of information which he may have thought to explain some points of these stories, or simply which may have seemed to him out of context. Although he introduces some of these appendices by the same vague expressions used before; he is more precise in introducing others. Speaking of the genealogy of Alexander, he says: "as for the *Rūm* and many of the versed [people] in genealogies, they say that he is Alexander son of Filfus." Moreover, in noting the length of Alexander's reign he compares between what the 'Persians' and the 'Christians' had to say: "While the Persians claim that Alexander's reign was fourteen years, the Christians claim that it was thirteen and [some] months and that the murder of Darius was in the beginning of the third year of his reign."

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[31] Franz Rosenthal, trans., *The History of Al-Tabari, Volume 1: General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, Albany, 1989, 11-12.

[32] Rosenthal, *The History of Al-Tabari,* 45.

[33] Where he states clearly his opinion; see Rosenthal, *The History of Al-Tabari,* 55.

[34] Cf., however, Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography,* 109 who argues that "we are not actually much informed" about Al-Tabari's methodology.

It is important to note Al-Tabari’s sources for this information since they were undoubtedly the same for his tales of Alexander just as much as it is interesting to note that he has attributed some of his information to the *Rūm* whom he distinguished from the Christians. An Arabic translation of Pseudo-Callisthenes may indeed have been the source of the information which he loosely attributed to the *Rūm* and to the Christians as opposed to the Persians. One might even wonder as well whether the opposition between the *Rūm* and the Christians corresponds to two different traditions of the Alexander Romance available to Al-Tabari; the latter of them (the Christian) being an earlier translation from the Syriac.[35] That a new translation of the Alexander Romance was available in the ninth century AD, when Al-Tabari lived, has recently been confirmed.[36]

Conclusion

It was the aim of this paper to discuss Al-Tabari’s tales of Alexander by giving an outline of these tales, explaining their romance nature, and by emphasizing their importance within the historical development of the Alexander Romance in the Islamic world of the ninth and tenth centuries. No such detailed discussion exists. Although these tales *per se* are not history, according to modern criteria, they were ironically used to explain historical events and were believed to have been a fair representation of the actual historical events. The tales of Alexander in Al-Tabari included some variations which indicate different sources and which reflect simultaneously different attitudes regarding some important issues, such as the character of Alexander. Seen collectively, and in this sense, they all serve to explain the collapse of the Persian empire following the campaigns of Alexander, but they also serve for the most part to justify and to legitimize his rule over this empire which he earned, after all, by the right of conquest.

Al-Tabari’s tales of Alexander record some *logoi* which were in circulation in the Arab and the Persian worlds in the preceding centuries. They, so far as can be told, bring together some traditions which were being reviewed and discussed at his time under the movement of translation. Since Al-Tabari differs in his methodology from other medieval Arab historians, he provides us with valuable information regarding the development of these tales. It is also clear from the title of the chapter which includes the tales of Alexander and Darius that Al-Tabari believed that Alexander was *Dhū'l-Qarnayn*. Since he was writing mainly a *history* of the Persian Empire, his chapter did not necessarily include a lot of the information which was available in his time about Alexander and which he briefly alluded to in the end of his chapter. To what extent the favorable image which he draws of this Greek leader as a legitimate heir of the Persian Empire may be truly or widely representative of the Persian view of Alexander at his time is yet to be seen. It can, however, be securely stressed that it was by no means a stable or a universal image.*

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[35] On this translation see lately Weinfield, *The Islamic Alexander,* 74-6.

[36] Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus,* 13-4, with the stemma on 91. See also the articles by Z. David Zuwiyya and by Emily Cottrell and Kyle Erickson in this volume.

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* I would like here to thank Professor Stoneman for giving me the chance to attend this wonderful conference on The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East and to the Soudavar Memorial Foundation for their generous hospitality and support. I would like also to thank Professor Doufikar-Aerts for giving me a copy of her recent authoritative study: *Alexander Magnus Arabicus.*

Al-Mubaššir ibn Fātik
and the α Version of the *Alexander Romance*[*]

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Since Bruno Meissner's incomplete edition and translation of the chapter of al-Mubaššir ibn Fātik's *Choicest Maxims and Best Sayings (Muḫtār al-Ḥikam wa Maḥāsin al-kilam)* on the life of Alexander the Great at the end of the nineteenth century, not much has been made of this important source of information on the Arabic transmission of the *Alexander Romance*, which became wrongly attributed on a medieval manuscript and has been known from then on as the Pseudo-Callisthenes.[1] This is all the more surprising, considering that Ibn Fātik preserves, among the Arabic versions, one that comes close to the lost α version of the *Romance*, although it is very much abbreviated, starts with Philip's death and contains no allusion to the Nectanebo episode.[2] Another pitfall of the recent studies on the Arabic *Alex-*

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[*] Participation in the symposium was funded within an EU-FP7 Marie Curie Fellowship ("Early Arabic Literature In Context: The Hellenistic Continuum") at the University of Leiden.

[1] B. Meissner, "Mubašširs Aḫbâr el-Iskender," *ZDMG* 49, 1895, pp. 583-627. Rudolf Macuch, "Pseudo-Callisthenes Orientalis and the Problem of Ḏu l-qarnain," in *Graeco-Arabica*, 4, 1991, 223-264 was the only one to point to some striking parallels between Ibn Fātik and the Syriac and Persian versions. F. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus. Zeven eeuwen Arabische Alexandertraditie: van Pseudo-Callisthenes tot Ṣūrī*, PhD Dissert. Leiden, Leiden University Press 2003; English tr. *Alexander Magnus Arabicus: A Survey Of The Alexander Tradition Through Seven Centuries: From Pseudo-Callisthenes To Ṣūrī*, Leuven, Peeters 2010 (hereafter *AMA English*.)

[2] The full text of the *Mukhtār al-ḥikam* was published by ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (ed.), Mubaššir ibn Fātik: *Los Bocados de Oro (Mujtār al-ḥikam)*, critical edition of the Arabic original, Madrid, Instituto Egypcio de Estudios Islamicos, 1958, who provided in his introduction some important insights on the position of the text in the network of medieval translations in Spanish, Latin, Old French and Old English. On the drawbacks of Badawī's edition, see the remarks of F. Rosenthal, "Al-Mubashshir Ibn Fātik: Prolegomena to an Abortive Edition, " in *Oriens* 13, 1960-1961, pp. 132-158. A translation of al-

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ander Romance is that none have taken into account the materials found in the other biographical excerpts on Aristotle, Diogenes, and Plato available to the medieval Arab historians. Thus, al-Mubaššir Ibn Fātik has lengthy separate chapters on each of these figures, where Alexander often appears in some anecdotes.[3] These materials have at time been related to the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Letters* to Alexander by such scholars as Bielawski, Plezia and Grignaschi, but no comprehensive study of their relation with the Pseudo-Callisthenes text has yet come to light.[4]

The α version of the *Alexander Romance* is lost, apart from a highly faulty eleventh-century Greek manuscript known as manuscript A, which has been corrected and reconstructed with the help of the longer β and γ versions, and enriched with additions and corrections derived from the retroversion of the Latin version by Julius Valerius, also thought to be based on the α version, as well as interpolations derived from a retroversion of the Armenian text.[5]

Shahrazūrī's chapter on the life of Alexander, the first part of which is a copy of Ibn Fātik's, appears in my doctoral dissertation, E. Cottrell, *Le Kitāb Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ wa Rawḍat al-Afrāḥ de Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī l'Ishrāqī : Composition et sources*, Paris, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (5ème section), Dec. 2004, pp. 220-240.

[3] Complete up-to-date bibliography in Doufikar-Aerts, *op. cit.*

[4] J. Bielawski and M. Plezia, *Lettre d'Aristote à Alexandre sur la Politique envers les cités*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, 1970 (Archiwum Filologiczne XXV), p. 9, p. 15. Apart from the obvious connections with the *Letters* studied by Grignaschi and Maroth (see references below and nn. 13,17,24), and with parts of the earliest version of the Arabic novel, transmitted under the name of ʻUmara b. Zayd (ca. 767-815 AD), two elements are drawing me to the conclusion that the materials disseminated in the Aristotle chapter should not be disregarded. They are: 1) the fact it contains some genuine biographical material on Aristotle, masterfully studied by I. During in his *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition* (Studia Graeca et Latina Gotoburgensia V), Göteborg and Stockholm, 1957; and 2) the fact that the Armenian version of Pseudo-Callisthenes has kept the trace of Aristotle by naming him as the author of the text in the colophon to book I, pointing to the direction of the numerous Pseudo-Aristotelica in circulation during the Roman period and passed on through Late Antiquity, on which see R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, vol. 1 (1989) and vol. 1 Supplément (2003), s.v. Pseudo-Aristote; H. Daiber, *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy*, II, p. 52. In the two last articles written by M. Grignaschi before his death, he attempted to correct some of his previous assumptions but remained in doubt concerning the relation between the *Epistolary romance* and the Pseudo-Callisthenes: M. Grignaschi, "Un Roman gréco-arabe: la correspondence entre Aristote et Alexandre," in M. Bridges, J. Ch. Bürgel (eds.), *The Problematics of Power*, Bern 1996, pp. 109-123 and Id., "La Figure d'Alexandre chez les arabes et sa genèse," in *Arabic Sciences and Theology*, 3:2, 1993, pp. 205-234.

[5] The edition of reconstructed α has been published by G. Kroll, *Historia Alexandri Magni (Pseudo-Callisthenes)*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1958, but C. Jouanno, *Naissance et Métamor-*

One of the characteristics of α is the lack of any Christian element. This is true also of the Latin version of the *Romance* written by Julius Valerius ca 360-380, of the anonymous Armenian version and to some degree also of the Arabic version preserved by Ibn Fātik, although it has a strong monotheist inclination.[6] The Syriac version, also considered to be close to the α version,[7] has surprisingly few Christian references, an extremly rare feature for a Syriac text. The most salient of these are the Gog and Magog episode and an allusion to the patriarch Joseph as being equivalent to the Egyptian god Serapis.[8]

The Syriac text shows several layers (the latest one being explanatory glosses giving equivalents in Neo-Persian) and may very well be a composite text, containing interpolations by translators and copyists. Ibn Fātik's Arabic version did also connect with the Syriac cultural realm at some stage, since one of the earliest preserved manuscripts of *The Choicest Maxims*, MS Berlin Or. 785 Quarto, probably copied in the 13th c., stems from Mar Mattai monastery in Mosul and has a bilingual Syriac-Arabic seal on its first folio

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phoses du Roman d'Alexandre, Paris 2002, p. 13, considers Kroll's text too corrupt to be useful.

[6] J.-P. Callu (ed. and tr.), *Julius Valère: Roman d'Alexandre*,Turnhout, Brepols, 2010; L. Canfora, *Histoire de la littérature grecque à l'époque hellénistique*, Paris 2004, p. 97, doubts the attribution to Julius Valerius ; A.M. Wolohojian, *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes*, New York-London, Columbia University Press, 1969. The Armenian translation is dated from the second half of the 5th c., see R. Schmitt, "An Iranist's remarks on the Armenian version of the Alexander Romance," in R. Bianca Finazzi and A. Valvo (eds.), *La diffusione dell'eredità classica nell'età tardoantica e medievale. Il "Romanzo di Alesandro" e altri scritti. Atti del Seminario internazionale di studio (Roma-Napoli, 25-27/9/1997)*, Alessandria 1998, pp. 257-266. On the monotheist inclination, see G. Fowden, "Pseudo-Aristotelian Politics and Theology in Universal Islam," in S.M.R. Darbandi and A. Zournatzi (eds.), *Ancient Greece and ancient Iran: Cross-cultural encounters. 1st International Conference, Athens, 11-13 November 2006*, pp. 65-81, esp. pp. 68-69.

[7] But see the cautious remarks by E. A. Wallis Budge (ed. and tr.), *The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1889, p. xliii. Ausfeld, followed by Doufikar-Aerts, *AMA (*English), p. 91, considers Syriac to be derived from a lost *δ version, see A. Ausfeld, *Der Griechische Alexanderroman*, Leipzig, Teubner,1907, pp. 17-23.

[8] Wallis Budge, *Op. cit.*, p. lix, about paragraph I,31 of the Syriac novel. I am grateful to Michael Chase (CNRS-Paris) for helping me complete Budge's reference to Firmicus Maternus, who lived shortly after Julius Valerius and happens to have a long development on this identification which he derives from an interpretation of Serapis in "*Sarras pais*," Gr. "child of Sarah," see his *De errore profanorum religionum*, chap. 12 (French translation : *L'erreur des religions païennes*, ed. and tr. R. Turcan, Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1982, pp. 106-107.)

and a Syriac foliotation.[9] Other signs of the diffusion of a text close to the Syriac version are the parallels between the Syriac version and a tenth-century Latin version by Leo Archipresbyter, who travelled from Naples to Constantinople in 950 and was able to purchase a Greek manuscript of the *Alexander Romance* which he translated into Latin under the title *Nativitas et Victoria*, later known as *Historia de preliis Alexandri Magni*.[10] The parallels resulted in the suggestion by Ausfeld of the existence of a *δ version.[11] As some of these parallels are shared also by the abbreviated version preserved in Ibn Fātik, Doufikar-Aerts was tempted to consider that Ibn Fātik's version drew upon the Syriac as we know it.[12] Along with the Armenian and the Syriac versions, this Arabic version is therefore of primary importance for our understanding of the extremely corrupt α tradition. It is a close contemporary of the Greek A manuscript, which belongs to the 10th-11th c. while Ibn Fātik wrote the *Choicest Maxims* in 1048-1049. Unfortunately only a summary of the events is preserved, and the focus of Ibn Fātik's version seems to be the speeches and *Letters*, although he admits he also abbreviated some of these as they had been quoted at length elsewhere in his works.[13]

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[9] The bilingual seal is mentioned in passing by G. Schoeler in his description of the manuscript, but the provenance is not given, see G. Schoeler, *Arabische Handschriften [in Berlin]*, Teil II, Stuttgart, 1990, s.v. Nr 327 (Or Quart 785), p. 391.

[10] The first edition by F. Pfister, *Der Alexanderroman des Archipresbyters Leo*, Heidelberg, Winter, 1913 (Sammlung Mittellateinischer Texte 6) has been folllowed by separate editions and studies on each of the three versions represented by the manuscripts. The Latin text is in public domain and available at the following url: http://thelatinlibrary.com/leo.html.

[11] Budge, p. xl, considered that the Syriac text may be dated as early as the seventh century while W. Wright thought it may belong to the tenth century and was made on an Arabic original (*loc. cit.*). Rudolf Macuch, "Pseudo-Callisthenes Orientalis and the Problem of Ḏu l-qarnain," in *Graeco-Arabica*, 4, 1991, pp. 232-236 supported Nöldeke's theory of a Middle-Persian original behind the Syriac. Both D. S. Margoliouth's review of Budge's edition and translation in *The Classical Review*, 4, 1890, pp. 259-261, and C. Ciancaglini, "Gli antecedenti del Romanzo siriaco di Alessandro," in R. Bianca Finazzi and A. Valvo (eds.), *La diffusione dell'eredità classica nell'età tardoantica e medievale. Il "Romanzo di Alesandro" e altri scritti. Atti del Seminario internazionale di studio (Roma-Napoli, 25-27/9/1997)*, Alessandria 1998, p. 55-93 show the late Persian background of the copyists (as already proposed by S. Gero, see R. Macuch*, op. cit.*, p. 235, n. 40). Frye has refuted some of Nöldeke's *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans* (= Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademi der Wissenschaften 38/V), Wien 1890, arguments for the existence of a Middle Persian version, see R. Frye, "Two Iranian Notes," in *Papers in honour of Professsor Mary Boyce (Acta Iranica 24, Hommages et Opera Minora X)*, Leiden 1985, pp. 185-190. To add to Frye's doubts on Nöldeke's argument on the R/L phoneme confusion, see P. Muradyan, "La Lezione *Kark'edovn/K'ałkedon* nelle fonti Armene altomedievali,"in R. Bianca Finazzi and A. Valvo (eds.), *La diffusione dell'eredità classica nell'età tardoantica e medievale. Il "Romanzo di Alesandro" e altri scritti. Atti del Seminario internazionale di studio (Roma-Napoli, 25-27/9/1997)*, Alessandria 1998, pp. 189-195.

[12] Doufikar-Aerts, *AMA* (English), p. 55.

The Arabic version of Ibn Fātik seems to suggest knowledge of a novel which contained none of the Egyptian and magico-astrological elements of the Pseudo-Callisthenes, and which had preserved complete Pseudo-Aristotelian treatises inserted in the novel among other exchanges, speeches, and letters of Alexander to his teacher Aristotle and other correspondents, just as in the Pseudo-Callisthenes.[14] For example, in the Pseudo-Callisthenes novel (III, 17) as we have it today in manuscript A, we can read right after the encounter with the Brahmans (the "Palladius source" of III.7) Alexander's letter to Aristotle containing his *Description of the marvels of India* (known as the *Epistola ad Aristotelem*),[15] and the request of Alexander that Aristotle send him his advice on politics, and government.[16] But in Ibn Fātik's we find Alexander's *Letter* summarized in one sentence as follows: 'Then he left them, and wrote to his teacher Aristotle informing him of the strange events which had happened to him and the wonderful things he had seen in India and asking his opinion about what he should do concerning his personal behaviour *(siyāsat amrihi)* and the government of the countries and peoples *(wa tadbīr al-bilād wa al-umam)* [Badawī p. 236].' This invitation seems to open the door for some of the Pseudo-Aristotelian treatises such as the *Risāla fī al-Siyāsat al-ʿāmmiyya*, or the Aristotelian *Peri Basileias* (later on identified with the *Huper apoikon*)[17] or even for the *Peri Kosmou* (*De Mundo)*, which appears to have been the desired answer.[18] Thus, we can read in manuscript Istanbul, Köprülü 1608 (fol. 182v-189v), which contains some of these Pseudo-Aristotelian treatises as well as other extracts of the *Alexander Romance* accompanied by Ḥunayn's ibn Isḥāq commentaries the following opening lines of the *Peri Kosmou*: "Greetings, your letter has reached me, in which you were mentioning your surprise at what you have seen of the golden temple in Sind [better: 'in Hind,' with al-Mas'ūdī?]… *(Ammā baʿd, fa-qad waṣala kitābuka tadhkuru taʿajjubaka mimmā raʾayta min bayt al-dhahab bi-l-Sind).*".[19] The letters, which cannot be separated from the *Romance*, enjoyed a wide circulation already before Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq and al-Mas'ūdī, who both quote from them. The latter informs us that they were read in Al-Ma'mūn's circle, and we agree with Grignaschi that a choice of letters was probably made by Sālim Abū al-'Alā', a scribe of the Umeyyad chancellery, out of a longer collection.[20]

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[13] See M. Grignaschi, "Le Roman épistolaire classique conservé dans la version arabe de Sālim Abū-l-'Alā', » in *Le Muséon* 80 (1967), pp. 211-264, and Doufikar-Aerts, *AMA* (English), pp. 29-34.

[14] This possibility should now take into account Callu's results in his dating of the core-story used by Julius Valerius, which he places between 50-60 BC and 16 AD. J.-P. Callu (ed. and tr.), *Julius Valère: Roman d'Alexandre*,Turnhout, Brepols, 2010, p. 28 « au plus tard sous la deuxième année du règne de Tibère, le *Roman d'Alexandre* était constitué en sa singularité mêlant une collection de lettres à un récit continu. »

[15] Ed. W. W. Boer, *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, Diss. Leiden University, 1953, reed. *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie*, 50, Meisenheim, 1973, French transl. G. Bounoure and B. Serret, *Pseudo-Callisthène. Le Roman d'Alexandre*, Paris 1992, Appendice I, pp. 123-146. Engl. trans. L.L. Gunderson, *Alexander's letter to Aristotle about India*, Meisenheim, 1980 (Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie 110); Synoptic edition by Michael Feldbusch, *Der Brief Alexanders an Aristoteles über die Wunder Indiens. Synoptische edition, Meisenheim*, 1976 (Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie 78) using the German translation of the Syriac by V. Ryssel, "Die syrische Übersetzung des Pseudo-Callisthenes," in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 90, 1893.

[16] Al-Mubaššir Ibn Fātik, *Los Bocados de Oro (Mujtār al-ḥikam)*, p. 236 ed. Badawī.

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[17] J. Lippert, *De epistula pseudaristotelica Peri Basileias commentatio*, Doctoral dissertation, Halle-Berlin 1891. J. Bielawski and M. Plezia, *Lettre d'Aristote à Alexandre sur la Politique envers les cités*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, 1970 (Archiwum Filologiczne XXV) has to be read with M. Grignaschi's remarks in his "La 'Siyāsatu-l-'āmmiyya' et l'influence iranienne sur la pensée politique islamique,' in *Monumentum H.S. Nyberg*, Leiden-Tehran-Liege, 1975, pp. 33-288 (Acta Iranica 6.) We now have an attempted synthesis in Miklós Maróth, *The Correspondence Between Aristotle and Alexander the Great. An Anonymous Greek Novel in Letters in Arabic Translation*, Piliscsaba, 2006.

[18] A. P. Bos has recently attempted to show that the *De Mundo* may indeed be genuinely Aristotelian. See his "Supplementary Notes on the 'De Mundo'," in *Hermes*, 119, 1991, pp. 312-332. We may wonder if the *Epistola ad Aristotelem* was once used as a "popular" cover-letter for the philosophical treatise. Dimitri Gutas "On Graeco-Arabic Epistolary 'Novels'," in *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 12.1 (2009), p. 59-70, on p. 62 (his book-review of Maroth's recent edition of the *Letters)* has some interesting remarks, but is far from being unbiased (in particular most of the references to Grignaschi's supposed discoveries are misleading.)

[19] See S. M. Stern, "The Arabic Translations of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De Mundo*," in *Le Muséon*, 77, 1964, pp. 187-204; and Id., "A Third Arabic Translation of the Pseudo-Aristotelian Treatise *De Mundo*," in *Le Muséon*, 78, 1965, pp. 381-393, reprinted in F. Sezgin et al. (eds.), *Pseudo-Aristotelica in Arabic Translation I*, Frankfurt-am-Main, 2000 (Islamic Philosophy 107), pp. 241-271. The 'Golden temple' which became the Arabic title of the *De Mundo*, refers to the temple of Dionysius described by Alexander in Pseudo-Callisthenes, see D. Brafman, *The Arabic De Mundo. An Edition with Translation and Commentary*, PhD Duke University, 1985, pp. 65-67.

[20] S. M. Stern, "A Third Arabic Translation," pp. 290-291; M. Grignaschi, La 'Siyāsatu-l-'āmmiyya'... (see above note 17), p. 36; Id., Un roman épistolaire gréco-arabe (see above note 3), p. 120. Id., see above note 13.

The Arabic of Ibn Fātik has preserved the flavor of the rhetorical masterpiece that had been translated, contrasting sharply with the disorganized extracts we read in another early Arabic version, by ‘Umara ibn Zayd (ca . 767-815 AD). This was noted long ago by Grignaschi, followed by Latham in his *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* article on ‘The epistolary genre in Arabic,’ where he mentions that none other than Sālim Abū al-‘Alā’, who had at his disposal some of the Aristotle-Alexander letters, established the patterns of the genre for the successive generations of secretaries.[21] Latham offers some important insights on the collection of sixteen letters exchanged between Alexander and Aristotle which M. Grignaschi considered “a work of Hellenistic epistolary fiction adapted by an Arab translator of the Umayyad period,” a position recently accepted by Maroth and Fowden.[22] Latham follows Grignaschi in stating that the contents and the geography of the sixteen letters were adapted to early eighth-century Umayyad politics, and the same could be said of the shortened *Alexander Romance* transmitted by al-Mubaššir ibn Fātik.[23] But as was demonstrated by Grignaschi, the mention of the Copts, Jacobites and Maronites in the *Letters* show that an earlier redaction has to be dated somewhere between the middle of the sixth or early seventh century.[24] It is also possible, now that we possess Maroth’s important study of the *Letters*, to say that Ibn Fātik’s Arabic version fits the rhetorical and philosophical patterns Maroth has pointed out: Platonic and Stoic virtues, monism, use of rhetorical devices. [25] As was noted by Jouanno in her study of the Greek *Alexander Romance* where she gave the example of the opposition between the *hubris* of the despot Darius and the balanced, philosophical attitude of Alexander, the rhetorical school has left its imprint all over the text.[26] In our view, this would all correspond nicely to Callu's dating of Julius Valerius's model, which he situates between the mid-1st c. BC and the beginning of the 1st c. AD. Maroth's and Plezia-Bielawski's achievements should now be reevaluated in a study encompassing not only the *Letters*, but also the *Alexander Romance*. This study would have to take into account Merkelbach's hypothesis of a core epistolary novel lying behind the Pseudo-Callisthenes novel.[27]

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[21] See J.D. Latham, “The beginnings of Arabic prose literature: the epistolary genre,” in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*. *Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period*, Cambridge 1983, pp. 154-164; we should add that letters are well attested in the earliest Arabic documention, that is the papyrological one, see chapter 3 of the same volume, R.B. Serjeant, “Early Arabic Prose,” esp. pp. 139-149 and for an up-to-date bibliography W. Diem, *Arabische Briefe auf Papyrus und Papier aus der Heidelberger. Papyrus-Sammlung*, Wiesbaden, 1991. Compare also the learned comments by H.T. Norris on Alexander’s fame among early Arab story-tellers, *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, chap. 8, “Qiṣaṣ elements in the Qur’ān,” esp. pp. 253-254.

[22] M. Grignaschi, “Le Roman épistolaire classique conservé dans la version arabe de Sālim Abū-l-‘Alā’, » in *Le Muséon* 80 (1967), p. 214.

[23] The Umayyad sovereigns in Syria had an administration of Greek and Christian scribes, and probably a deep understanding of their continuity from Antiquity and Late Antiquity, see G. Fowden, “Greek Myth and Arabic Poetry at Quṣayr ‘Amra,” in A. Akasoy, J.E. Montgomery, P. Pormann (eds.), *Islamic Crosspollinations : Interactions in the Medieval Middle East*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 29-45, esp.pp. 37-38 and nn. 53 and 54a.

[24] M. Grignaschi, *Op. cit*., p. 248; G. Fowden, *Op. cit*., p. 66; M. Maroth, “The Correspondence between Aristote and Alexander the Great. An anonymous Greek Novel in Letters in Arabic Translation,” in *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 45 (2001), pp. 231-315, esp. p. 295.

Already in Armenian, the *Alexander Romance* had set the rules of epistolary rhetoric.[28] The same could be said of the Latin text, which was masterfully studied by Callu recently.[29] We should now add to these the Arabic *Letters* contained in the *Alexander Romance* and in the three independent manuscripts studied by Grignaschi and by Maroth (two for the collection of sixteen letters and one which includes six of the sixteen letters with other materials and letters taken from the *Romance*.)

The novel and the epistolary materials and speeches within it helped to shape both literary standards and politics around the Mediterranean for more than a millennium, if we include the European medieval versions. As a matter of fact, the Alexander legends and mirrors were *the* manuals of politics until Machiavelli. The collection of letters of which sixteen survived in an independent transmission did originally contain some parts of the narration, since we can read at the beginning of the manuscript Aya Sofia 4260 (I did not check the Fatih manuscript) a short introductive summary about Philip of Macedonia being childless. Other parts of the story were in circulation within Biblical commentaries, such as those on the *Book of Daniel*, and widely read in the East.[30] Now the Syriac text has still not been studied apart from Budge's introduction to his edition and translation and from two recent studies by Claudia Ciancaglini.[31] The Syriac version shares with Julius Valerius, the A manuscript, and the Armenian version the Nectanebo episodes, the details on the foundation of Alexandria, the Candace episode, all absent in Ibn Fātik, as well as the fantastic and astrologico-magical elements. Another proof that the Alexander chapter of *The Choicest Maxims* is not derived from the Syriac text published by Budge are the references to additional letters and speeches, and the fact neither the anthroponyms nor the details of the parallels show any possible trace of a direct influence. It is not clear at this stage if this is due to the fact that it derives from an other version (*δ) or if this more rationalizing version of the *Alexander Romance* was enriched at a later stage by the Egyptian episodes, something we would expect in the Roman empire between the 1st c. BC and the 1st c. AD. In what follows, I will address two questions: the anthroponyms of the main characters in the *Romance*, and the "list of presents of the Chinese king to Alexander," an episode absent from the Greek versions but which can be compared in the Arabic, Syriac, Ethiopic, and Persian versions. Since our main objective in this paper is to show that the Arabic text does not depend on the Syriac we possess, I will limit myself to these two versions.

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[25] *Op. cit.*, p. 239-245.

[26] Jouanno, *Op. cit.*, pp. 31-33; I am tempted to consider what have been seen as historical errors committed by the Pseudo-Callisthenes as actual rhetorical tours, similar to those we can find in the *Pseudo-Hippocratic Letters*. Using some famous characters and composing for them speeches 'à la manière de' was what distinguished a rhetorical exercise from a forgery.

[27] J.-P. Callu, *supra* note 6 ; R. Merkelbach, *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans*, Munich, 1954 (Zetemata 9).

[28] A.M. Wolohojian, *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes*, New York-London, Columbia University Press, 1969, p. 11.

[29] Jouanno and Callu point to the presence of Latinisms in the Greek text of A. On the rhetoric tools used in the novel see Callu, p. 16, nn. 79-81 and p. 17. Several communications presented at the R. Finazzi and A. Valvo (eds.), *La diffusione dell'eredità classica nell'età tardoantica e medievale. Il "Romanzo di Alesandro" e altri scritti. Atti del Seminario internazionale di studio (Roma-Napoli, 25-27/9/1997)*, Alessandria 1998, show how the Armenian text could be used to correct Kroll's text. Kroll is now replaced, for book I only, by Stoneman's recent critical edition: Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Il Romanzo di Alessandro*, Milano, 2007

A note on the anthroponyms in al-Mubaššir ibn Fātik's Arabic version

The transliterations of the Greek names in Ibn Fātik's chapter do not point to the Syriac text as being the model used for the Arabic translation. Amyntas, Philip's father, has been correctly preserved in Arabic as *Aminṭas*, but we find no mention of him in the Syriac text, something due to the fact the Syriac starts with the fantastic Nectanebo episode and does not delve into historical information on the Macedonian dynasty. Philip is consistently called *Fīlifūs* in Syriac, while he is named *Fīlībūs* in Arabic. Alexander is *Aleksandrūs* throughout the Syriac, while he is *al-Iskandar* in Arabic. Darius (= Darius III) is not *Dariyūš* (which reflects the Persian pronunciation and is attested in al-Mas'ūdī for example), as in Syriac, but the form *Dārā*, or *Dārā ibn Dārā* ("Darius son of Darius") is used throughout the Arabic text.[32] As a matter of fact, Dārā, which exists also in Neo-Persian, perfectly reflects Dareh, which is used in the Armenian version.[33] Moreover, Olympias is transliterated *Alūmfīdā* in Syriac while in Arabic we find a phrase calque of her name in Greek, where it has been understood as meaning 'the Elevated,' hence Arabic *Rūqiyya*, This is paralleled only in the early Arabic version transmitted by 'Umara ibn Zayd.[34] Pausanias, who attempts to kill Philip and to take Olympias for himself, has become in Arabic *Fāūs*, which is probably the remaining half of an original **Fāūs[-ānias]*, and is certainly different from Syriac *Ṯīūsīdūs*. Poros has also been abbreviated, in both Syriac and Arabic, into *Pūr* (Syr.) and *Fūr* (Ar.).

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[30] See R. Macuch, "Pseudo-Callisthenes Orientalis and the Problem of Ḏu l-qarnain," in *Graeco-Arabica*, 4, 1991, p. 252.

[31] C. A. Ciancaglini, "The Syriac Version of the Alexander Romance," in *Le Muséon*, 114, 2001, pp. 121-40; Id. "Gli antecedenti del Romanzo di Alessandro," in R. Finazzi and A. Valvo (eds.), *La diffusione dell'eredità classica nell'età tardoantica e medievale. Il "Romanzo di Alesandro" e altri scritti. Atti del Seminario internazionale di studio (Roma-Napoli, 25-27/9/1997)*, Alessandria 1998, pp. 55-93.

More difficult to explain is the fact that Roxane has kept in Arabic the form of her name that is given in the Syriac text, namely *Rošang* (the Persian form being *Rošanak.*)[35] This may be normal in an Eastern Syriac text, but a little less in Arabic, even if we have to admit that Greek letter *Ksi* has no equivalent in this language, which is why *Alexandros* became *Iskandar* by metathesis. Did Roxane achieve such fame already in Late Antiquity that she was known in the Near and Middle East as *Rošang*? Did some ancient texts preserve the Persian or the Syriac name of the daughter of Darius? After all, the Graeco-Persian dynasty which would have stemmed from her alliance with Alexander became a reality under the Seleucids and the Commagenes.[36] This fusion passed into later Persian and Arabic literature erroneously associated with the Sasanian dynasty, as if the old statues on Mount Nimrod had to be granted a myth of continuity, securing the memory of a glorious past.[37]

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[32] See *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Darius [*EIr* redaction], at the following url: http://www.iranica.com/articles/darius-v.

[33] Schmitt, *Op. cit.*, p, 259 and p. 262 where he notes Dareh is used also in the Armenian Bible.

[34] See the extract published by I. Friedlaender, *Die Chadhirlegende und der Alexanderroman*, Leipzig-Berlin 1913, p. 309.17 where it is wrongly (or intentionally?) spelled Rūmiyya, which may also be understood as 'the Roman woman.' On this version see Doufikar-Aerts, *AMA (English)*, pp. 35-45, and the paper of D. Zuwiyya, in this volume.

[35] See F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, Marburg, 1895, p. 262.

[36] Roxane was not Darius's daughter but a Bactrian princess. The Achaemenid Cyrus II, though, had a daughter bearing this name, for which reason I am tempted to add this exemple to the infinite rhetorical arrangements of the *Romance.*

The presents of the Chinese king

The Chinese episode depicts the (fictional) pacific conquest of China by Alexander, just after his victory over Poros and his encounter with the Brahmans. It appears in the Syriac (pp. 109-113 of Budge's translation) and Ethiopic (pp. 172-180 of Budge's translation) versions as well as in the Persian *Shahnamah*[38] and in the early Arabic extracts gathered under the name of 'Umara ibn Zayd (MS London, Brit. Lib. 8691, fol. 50b-53a).[39] The focus of the Arabic version used by Ibn Fātik, which it shares with the one ascribed to 'Umara ibn Zayd, is to present Alexander as a civilizing hero and a monotheist.[40] The Arabic seems to abbreviate the story we have in Syriac, but a close comparison of one paragraph (the list of presents sent by the king as a token of surrender) shows instead that the Arabic does not parallel the Syriac as it is preserved today, but is more comprehensive. The list of presents as we have it in 'Umara does fit a Chinese context but is different and less imaginative than the one we read in Ibn Fātik. Then, as Doufikar-Aerts has demonstrated, 'Umara ibn Zayd shows deep parallels with the Syriac version known to us, but one should point to the fact that the list of presents in Ibn Fātik differs from that in 'Umara, while being close to the Syriac.[41]

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[37] See *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s. v. Commagene [M. Weiskopf], available at the following url : http://www.iranica.com/articles/commagene-a-portion-of-southwestern-asia-minor-modern-turkey-. In the Medieval period, it is especially in the writings of Sohravardi and the Ishrāqī school that we find repeated assertions on this mythical ascendency of the Persian and išrāqī-s philosophers. See Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, *Kitāb Ḥikmat al-išrāq*, ed. H. Corbin, Tehran-Paris, 1977 ; H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, [vol. II: *Sohrawardi et les Platoniciens de Perse*, Paris, 1971.]

[38] See Abolqasem Ferdowsi*, Shahnameh. The Persian Book of Kings*, New York, 2006, tr. D. Davis, pp. 519-521.

[39] The name of the emperor's general, Gundaphar (Gondophares), cannot be a mere invention of the Syriac author. It is a direct allusion to the first century AD Indo-Parthian king Gondophares, following the same general rhetorical freedom used all over the Pseudo-Callisthenes for Poros and others. See Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1889, p. 109, n.4.

[40] Doufikar-Aerts, *AMA* (English), p. 41, p. 84.

[41] The reference to China as "*al-Ṣīn*" in 'Umara ibn Zayd is somehow suspicious, but if it is genuinely from the second part of the eighth century, it would be among the earliest reference to China under this name in Arabic.

The trace of an insertion of the episode is made clear by the fact that in Syriac, Alexander fights a dragon just before arriving at the boundaries of China, while in the Arabic version by ʻUmara the fight against the dragon comes right after the Chinese episode, on the way back to Merv in Central Asia. These insertions (the dragon episode and the visit to China) are non-extant in Greek. They appear in the oriental versions at the place where we should find Alexander's *Letter to Aristotle on his expedition to India* (the *Epistola ad Aristotelem*), where Alexander describes to his teacher the wonders he has seen in India. The letter in question, dealing with *mirabilia* but mentioning several episodes that we can read at length in the narrative versions, seems to have been the epistolary version of some episodes, belonging to a core epistolary novel, as Merkelbach supposed it for other segments of the novel.

The Arabic seems to be based on a longer, more detailed version, at least for the list of presents, while the narration of events is plainly abbreviated. Ibn Fātik's version alludes to letters that seems to have been skipped, and we can find an allusion to a letter also in ʻUmara, which we will quote below after the table comparing the Syriac and the Arabic paragraph. The Syriac story has Alexander coming in disguise to the court of the Chinese king, that is, using a device also present in the Pseudo-Callisthenes novel (II.7), where this anonymous visit is made to Darius at Persepolis. Another visit in disguise (this time to Porus!), is preserved only in Armenian and mentioned as well in Alexander's *Letter to Aristotle on his expedition to India*, §§ 33-34.[42] Adding some parallels to the translation of some extracts of a Syriac version preserved in Urmiah until the mid-nineteenth century, Woolsey noted that the Chinese episode was new to the preserved Greek versions but he suggested that it might have grown from a mention of the silk-making Seres which appears in the Palladius episode as he could read it, and which was inserted (at this same place) in the Greek A manuscript.[43]

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[42] See above, note 15.

[43] J. Perkins and T. D. Woolsey, "Notice of a Life of Alexander the Great," *JAOS* 4, 1854, p. 357-440, at p. 378. C. Jouanno, *Op. cit.*, p. 46-47, n. 140 notices that the mention of the Seres can be dated from the 1st-2nd c. AD.

Arabic version	**Syriac version**
	[Alexander has arrived alone at the gate of the palace of the king of China, disguised as one of his envoys. The king decides to submit and to honour him, after Alexander told him that ‘he has been established over all the kings of the world by the will and decree of the heavenly gods.’]
“He then went to China, and when he arrived at its boundaries he started to exchange letters with the king of China. And there was between them a number of letters. The last of these letters was about the decision that the king of China would submit to Alexander and to his promulgation, and he sent him the crown he was wearing and the following message: “You deserve it more than I do.”	“And at that moment, he gave a girdle (*pīlūṭa*)[45] into my hands, and he also gave me a golden crown, adorned with pearls (or ‘coral’?)[46] and rubies,[47] and
He also sent him gifts of a value of 100,000 *raṭl*:[44]	[of a value of (?)][48] 1,000 talents,

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[44] According to Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, London 1863, p. 1102, the *riṭl* or *raṭl* is used to weigh, and may be translated as ‘pound-weight,’ or ‘pint-weight.’ The Baghdad system had 1 *raṭl* = 12 *ūqiyya* or ‘ounces’ (with 1 ounce = 1,66 *istār* and 1 *istār* = 4,5 *miṯqāl*). According to the Syriac dictionary of Bar Bahlūl, p. 809, one talent was equivalent of 400 *raṭl*. It is unclear whether the text is speaking of the value or of the weight of these presents.

[45] Perkins-Woosley translation: ‘girdle’ with Bar Bahlul, col. 1544; Budge, ‘cloak.’ Payne-Smith, *Thesaurus*, col. 3145 gives both ‘girdle’ and ‘a woolen piece of cloth.’ Liddel and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1183, has *pilôtos* and *piletos*, used for any piece of felt-cloth.

[46] Syr. *marganītā* has both meaning: ‘pearl’ and ‘coral,’ see Bar Bahlūl dictionary col. 1151.

[47] Bar Bahlul, col. 849 has this word with the meaning *al-yāqūt*, ‘rubis.’ The mention of a red crown appears in the description of an Egyptian clepsydra where Alexander figures as a pharaoh, see Guy Lodomez, “Les fragments de clepsydre de la dynastie des Argéades (332-304 av. J.-C.),” in *Chronique d’Egypte*, pp. 57-76, on p. 62.

[48] The first word, which we have tentatively translated in brackets, was not understood by Budge. If we read with him Syr. *may-kasā* (alt. MS: *mayūkasā*), we may find a trace of a meaning similar to that of the Arabic text, where a highly classical and idiomatic expression, *min al-’ayn*, is used, which I translate ‘of the value of.’ It is possible that *al-’ayn*, meaning ‘source’ in Arabic, was misunderstood and translated in Syr. *may-* (‘water’). My colleague Jan van Ginkel (Leiden University), suggests the possibility that an original *mīṭaksā* (see Bar Bahlul, col. 1070), a Greek word which carries among other things the meaning of ‘raw silk’ would have been copied here by mistake from one of the several occurences of words related to silk in the following lines. Finally, we should mention that as Syriac uses letters to represent numbers *may-kasā* may be understood as “value (*may-*,

10,000 long pieces of white silk,	he gave me 10,000 [pieces] of undyed silk,
5,000 pieces of thick silk brocade,[49]	5,000 brocaded silks, of which 200 sewed as long garments,[52]
	100 painted skins,
200 pieces of prepared leather,	
100 Indian swords the hilts of which had been adorned with precious stones,	1,000 Indian swords,
100 horses from his stacks,	5 wild horses, and
2,500 skins of sables *(sammūr)*,	
2,500 skins of fennec foxes *(fanak)*, and	
2,500 skins of weasels,	
100 Chinese saddles,	
100 bowls[50] of amber,	
1,000 *miṯqāl* of musk,	1,000 skins of musk, and
100 *raṯl* of aloes wood,	
1 500 *raṭl* of golden crockery,	
500 servants,	
1,000 coats of mail with their hauberks, chausses and helmets, and finally	
20 horns of vipers (for 'horned vipers?') with horns an arm long.[51]	10 horns of vipers, each of which was a cubit long[53]

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misunderstood from Ar. '*ayn*)" followed by a number (represented by letters *kaf-semkat-olaf*. The number as we read it would be 25, if we correct the *semkat* (which is used for 60 and should come before the *kaf* = 20) of *kasā* into a *he* (=5). The olaf would then be a mistake resulting in the copyist not understanding he had to read here a number. Now according to the early 10th c. lexicographer Bar Bahlul, col. 809, s.v. *ṭalīṭa*, a talent weighs four hundred *raṯl*, therefore 25 talents would be 10,000 *raṭl*.

[49] The *šuqqa* is described as such by Lane, p. 1578, 'the half of a garment, consisting of two oblong pieces sewed together.' It also means the whole garment, or an oblong piece, *loc.cit*.

[50] On *jumjama*, see the *Lisān al-'Arab* dictionary: *al-jumjama ḍarb min al-makāyil*, i. e. 'a measure of weight.'

[51] The Ethiopic version preserves only the four last items, see E. Wallis Budge, *The Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great,* London, 1896, p. 180.

[52] Correcting Budge who translates *de-qanya*, 'of canes,' or 'reed,' with Costaz, p. 323 who mentions the meaning 'of the length of,' sometimes given as equivalent to a length of six cubits. This may reflect the Arabic which added to the mention of the brocaded silks *šuqqa* of *istabraq* just before. *Šuqqa* also carries the meaning of a measure, according to J. Margoliouth, abbreviated translation of Payne-Smith *Thesaurus*, *Compendious Syriac-English Dictionary*, 1903, p. 593, s.v. *šaqīta*, 'a thick measuring rod.'

Afterwards, the ambassadors of China came to him and he started to give them recommendations and to exhort them and he ordered them to follow the obligatory customs of equity and he wrote them a covenant *(ahd)* that they should keep, to learn about their own history. Then he went away."

ثمّ سار إلى الصين. فلمّا نزل بتخومه تراسل
هو و ملك الصين و تكاتبا و مضتْ بينهما
مخاطبات كثيرة، استقرّ آخرها على أنْ أنفذ
إليه ملك الصين يخبره بطاعته له و إذعانه إلى
قوله، و بعث إليه بتاجه الذي يلبسه و قال له:
"أنت أحقّ به منّي". و أنفذ إليه هدية و هي من
العين مائة ألف رطل، و من سَرَق الحرير
الأبيض عشرة آلاف سرقة، و من الاستبرق
خمسة آلاف شُقّة، و مائتا جلد مصوّرة، و مائة
سيف هندي محلاة مرصعة بالجوهر، و مائة فرس
من مراكبه، و ألفان و خمسمائة جلد سمّور و
ألفان و خمسمائة جلد فنك، و ألفان و خمسمائة
جلد دلق، و مائة سرج صيني، و مائة جمجمة
عنبر، و ألف مثقال مسك، و مائة رطل عود، و ألف
و خمسمائة رطل ذهب معمول أواني، و خمسمائة
وصيف، و ألف درع بسوقها و سواعدها و
بيضها، و عشرون قرن حيّة طول كلّ قرن ذراعٌ.
ثمّ قدم وفد الصين عليه فوصّاهم و وعظهم و
أمرهم بلزوم السُنن الواجبة العادلة، و كتب لهم
عهداً أبقاه في أيديهم يعملون عليه في
سيرتهم. و انصرف عنهم.

al-Mubaššir ibn Fātik, *The Choicest Maxims*, p. 239, ed. ʻA.-R. Badawi.

[And he said to me: 'Take these as a present from me to Alexander...]"

ܘܒܗ ܒܥܕܢܐ ܗܘ ܦܠܘܛܐ ܒܐܝܕ̈ܝ ܝܗܒ
ܐܦ ܟܠܝܠܐ ܚܕ ܕܕܗܒܐ ܝܗܒ ܠܝ ܕܡܪ̈ܓܢܝܬܐ
[illegible] ܡܣܝܡ ܗܘܐ
ܘܡܢ ܟܣܦܐ ܐܠܦ ܛܠܢܛܐ
ܘܡܐܢ̈ܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܢܝܢ [illegible] ܐܠܦ̈ܝܢ ܝܗܒ ܠ
ܘܐܣܛܠ̈ܐ ܚܡܫܐ ܐܠܦ̈ܐ
ܘܕܡܘܬܐ [illegible] ܡܐܬܝܢ
ܘܡܐܢ̈ܐ [illegible] ܡܐܐ
[illegible] [illegible] ܐܠܦܐ
ܘܪ̈ܟܫܐ ܕܒܪܐ ܚܡܫܐ
[illegible] ܕܡܘܫܟ ܐܠܦܐ
ܘܩܪ̈ܢܬܐ ܕܚܘܝܐ ܥܣܪ ܚܕܐ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܐܪܝܟܐ
ܐܡܬܐ ܚܕܐ

Syriac text edited and translated with the help of Jan van Ginkel (Leiden University) from E. Wallis Budge *The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes*, p. 200 (transl. p. 112) and the earlier edition by J. Perkins and T. D. Woolsey, "Notice of a Life of Alexander the Great," *JAOS* 4, 1854, p. 357-440, p. 435 (transl. p. 404).[54]

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[53] 'A cubit long,' *arīka amta.* One may wonder if *arīka* is not a mistake for *arʻa*, 'arm, the length of a forearm,' meaning as well 'a cubit.'.

[54] A German translation was made after Budge's text by V. Ryssel, "Die syrische Übersetzung des Pseudo-Callisthenes : ins Deutsche übertragen," in *Archiv fur das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Litteraturen* 90 (1883), pp. 83-134, 269-288, 353-340 (available here: http://menadoc.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/content/titleinfo/645695). The list of presents is on p. 374.

The text we read in ‘Umara ibn Zayd shows more than one parallel with Ibn Fātik, the most striking being the gesture of the Chinese king giving his own crown to Alexander disguised as an envoy with the following statement “Give it to him and tell him: O my master, you deserve it more than I do, and I am sending you as well some presents that I will name in my letter...”. The list of presents is the following, and it does approximately correspond to what we read in Ibn Fātik: “50,000 pieces *(šuqqa)* of red Chinese silk; the same of white silk and the same of green silk; and 10,000 ornamented Indian swords; 10,000 ample Indian coats of mail; 50,000 horns of *nağab* (?) [probably a mistake for *ḥayyāt*, snakes], each horn measuring 3 cubits and more; 10 *qanāṭir*[55]of musk, 10 of amber, 10 of sandalwood, 10,000 large golden vessels *(ṣaḥfa)*, with 10,000 *(liğām)* pieces of silver and 10,000 vessels *(qaṣ‘a)* of precious stones.” (‘Umara ibn Zayd, *Qiṣṣat al-Iskandar*, fol. 51v-52r).

This list of presents recalls the long and detailed list of Candace’s presents in the Pseudo-Callisthenes (III.18). Jouanno showed how the elements in this other list reveal a good knowledge of Egypt and of the Candaces of Meroe, while at time reflecting some literary topoi taken from Herodotus and others.[56] This taste for exoticism appears elsewhere in the *Romance* but we must notice that in the presents from the Chinese king, we find as well both rare animals and rare products of Central Asia, just as in the Candace episode where the presents reflected the geography of the Queen. Finally, as to the vipers’ horns, they may have been originally horned vipers that were not identified by the copyists and translators. We are reminded here of the role of vipers in the famed theriac recipes in which rare Far Eastern products often figured.

Conclusion

The fortune of the Macedonian hero in Syriac may be seen as a natural development of one of the foundation myths of Edessa, named after the ancient Macedonian royal city and founded by Seleucus I Nicator on a pre-existent settlement in 303 AD. There is no doubt that the foundation myth was still known in the 6th-7th c., when the earliest Syriac versions of the *Alexander*

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[55] See Lane, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, p. 2569, s.v. *qanṭara* ‘a quantity of no determined weight.’

[56] C. Jouanno, *Naissance et Métamorphoses du Roman d’Alexandre*, Paris 2002, p. 90.

Romance were probably composed.[57] Michael the Syrian, writing in the 12th century, but drawing from older sources, mentions the Macedonian establishment and the derivation of the name.[58] But the Old Syriac version, which probably underlies some of the Arabic, Persian, and Syriac versions we have, is lost. There is no reason, however, why the medieval Syriacs could not have used the numerous Syriac, Arabic and Persian versions in circulation, not to mention the Armenian (more than seventy manuscripts are still known today), which were certainly also available to them, as well as some Greek and Latin versions. Thus a concrete analysis of the Syriac text we possess today is a desideratum before any history of the transmission can be offered.

The origin of the expression 'The Two-Horned' (*dhū al-qarnayn*) is a complex one. As often with Eastern mythology, several folk-tales and historical events may have aggregated.[59] An etymology which claims that *dhū al-qarnayn* did not mean 'two horns' but 'two braids' and was first given as a nickname to a Parthian king appears in an important but neglected text by the tenth-century Christian Syrian historian Agapius (Maḥbūb of Manbīj) where Samiros, the victor of the Parthian king Kisrumis, makes a crown from the scalp of his victim and is therefore called "With the two braids" which the author gives as equivalent to Greek '*diokratis*' although the word does not appear in our modern lexicons. Since the Syriac and Armenian Pseudo-Callisthenes contain references to the Parthians, the reference is worth noting:

> "At that time Kisrounis, king of Parthia, made war against Samiros and after having fought him killed him; he tore off the skin of his head and the hair, braided them in four braids, and made a crown for himself from it. For this reason, he was called Diokratis, i.e. having two horns *(Dhou-l-Karnein)*. This is not the same person as Alexander Dhou-l-Karnein, because Alexander was called Dhou-l-Karnein after his passage and his

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[57] R. Duval, *Histoire politique, religieuse et littéraire d'Edesse jusqu'à la première croisade*, Paris 1892, p. 22-23. J. B. Segal, *Edessa, the Blessed City*, Oxford, 1970 (repr. Piscataway, 2001), p. 9-10. Edessa and Armenia were allied against the Romans in the second half of the 1st c. BC, see H.J.W. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, Leiden, 1980, p. 11.

[58] Michel le Syrien, *Chronique*, trad. J.-B. Chabot, Paris,, 1899, t. I, p. 119 (livre V, chap. V).

[59] Rudolf Macuch, "Pseudo-Callisthenes Orientalis and the Problem of Ḏu l-qarnain," in *Graeco-Arabica*, 4, 1991, 223-264, esp. p. 237; p. 241-242; p. 247; pp. 251-252; p. 263 shows that the nickname was first applied to Cyrus II (pp. 252-257).

> arrival in the East and the West." [ed. Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis* V, p. 635.][60]

The latter etymology is the one favoured by 'Umara ibn Zayd, who mentions repeatedly the fact that Alexander had reached the two extremities of the world ("*fa-sāra min quṭr al-arḍ ilā quṭr al-arḍ...*" [fol. 49v] and had ridden the Western horn of the sun ("*wa-aḫaḏa maġribaha wa-arkabahā*" [loc. cit.], in compliance with the method and style of Qur'ānic commentaries on verses 18:86-101. It has been known for a long time that already before 'Umara's time, the name 'Dhū al-qarnayn' was given as a laudatory epithet to the 6th-century Lakhmid king Mundhir al-Akbar (III) and one should point out here that the Lakhmid court was under both Christian and Manichaean influences since it was a centre of Arabic culture on the trade road between Palmyra and South-Arabia, and eventually became a vassal of the Sassanid state. It is therefore very likely that if legends of Alexander developed in Eastern Syriac, they probably started in this environment.[61] I am tempted to think that the epithet was applied to Alexander as a result of the spread of the coins of his successors all over the Near and Middle East (including the Eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula) which often depicted him or some Seleucid or Ptolemaic sovereign wearing Ammon's horns.[62] The extensive meaning of the word *qarn* in Aramaic and cognate languages helped to gather more details for the legend to take shape. These coins may have been, quite incidentally, among the factors behind the wide diffusion of the myth.

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[60] I used here the English version of Vasiliev's French translation of the text given by Roger Pearse at the following url: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pearse/ morefathers/files/agapius_history_01_part1.htm with further references and bibliography.

[61] *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd edition*, vol. IV, p. 127, s. v. al-Iskandar [W. Montgomery Watt]; ; J. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1926, pp. 111-3; E. Hunter, "The Christian Matrix of al-Hira," in C. Jullien (ed.), *Les Controverses des Chrétiens dans l'Iran Sassanide.* Paris, 2008 (Cahiers Studia Iranica 36), pp. 41-56.

[62] See Macuch, *Op. cit.*, p. 264.

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Aspects of Alexander in Coptic Egypt

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The nine preserved fragments of a Coptic-language version of the Alexander Romance[1] continue to provide scholars with unsolved puzzles.[2] The paper (hence late) manuscript was discovered in the 'White Monastery' near Sohag in Upper Egypt in about the early 1880s and dispersed in parts to libraries in Paris, London, and Berlin.[3] Though this text, in Sahidic with Bohairic influences, seems to have been copied in about the 10th-11th century,[4] the version of the Romance it transmits was probably made by a bilingual, Greek- and Coptic-speaking Egyptian redactor much earlier, possibly the 6th century. However, there is far from being a consensus on these matters.[5]

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[1] O. von Lemm, *Der Alexanderroman bei den Kopten* (St Petersburg 1903). English translation in G. Maspero, *Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt*, ed. and intro. H. El-Shamy (Oxford 2002, repr. 2004) 243-253.

[2] For recent remarks see D.L. Selden, "The Coptic Alexander Romance," in *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. Z.D. Zuwiyya (Leiden 2011), and idem, "Guardians of Chaos," *Journal of Coptic Studies* 13 (2011) (I thank him for copies).

[3] See S. Emmel, "The library of the White Monastery in Upper Egypt," in *Spätantike Bibliotheken: Leben und Lesen in den frühen Klöstern Ägyptens*, ed. H. Froschauer and C. Römer (Vienna 2008) 5-14, esp. 7-8; cf. T. Orlandi, "The library of the monastery of Saint Shenute at Atripe," in *Perspectives on Panopolis*, ed. A. Egberts et al. (Leiden 2002) 211-231, esp. 227-228.

[4] Whether the manuscript was itself made at the White Monastery or elsewhere is not known.

[5] C. Jouanno, "La réception du *Roman d'Alexandre* à Byzance," *Ancient Narrative* 1 (2000-2001) 301-321, abstract online; eadem, *Naissance et metamorphoses du Roman* d'Alexandre (Paris 2002), esp. 247-248, 339, 408 n. 73; earlier work in A.L. Khosroev, "Towards a history of the Coptic Romance of Alexander," [in Russian] *Palestinskii Sbornik* 28 (1986) 153-157, postulating an additional Greek original over and above the one thought to have been composed by a Hellenistic Alexandrian. The Christian material was of course worked in later: see Jouanno, *Naissance*, 337-388, "Un Alexandre christianisé."

I should like to highlight three portions of the Coptic version that may help us to a clearer picture of how Christian Egyptians viewed Alexander the Great in late antiquity and the early middle ages: (1) the addition of a moralising biblical verse to at least one chapter-heading; (2) the three companions of Alexander who are unique to this version and its treatment of the 'Land of Darkness'; and (3) the literary 'will' of one of those companions as a reflection of known documentary practice.

To begin at the end, viz. at the bottom of the last preserved fragment: fol. 6v of the Paris MS (fragment 9), after a version of Ps.-Callisthenes' narrative of Cassander's revenge plot with the cupbearer Iollas to poison the king, ends with a set-off chapter-heading reading "36: Concerning those who gave to drink the deadly drink" followed by (a slightly variant text of) Sirach 40:29, "One who looks upon a table (ⲧⲣⲁⲡ[ⲉⲍⲁ]) that is not his own, his life is not life." This apparently introduces the penultimate section that would have provided an equivalent to the scene of Alexander at table (τράπεζα) being given the poison. From this von Lemm drew two conclusions: (a) that the complete original had contained 37 (or 38) sections in all, and (b) that each of the now missing chapter headings had also incorporated a proverb of some kind. Though only speculation is possible about what the first 35 might have been, trying to discern the relation of the biblical saying to the subject-matter here will help us grasp the intent of the story. It appears that for this narrator the poisoners (those 'looking upon someone else's table') are the villains and Alexander the murdered hero: in the previous section the plot is termed a 'lawbreaking deed' (παρανομία). This fits well with other late antique Eastern Christian figures of Alexander the 'believing king', Christlike *avant la lettre.*

Explicitly taken from Judaeo-Christian scripture is the way the Coptic tale introduces the famous episode of Alexander's visit to the Land of Darkness, here via Paradise. Fragment 7 (in the London MS) begins, "He [Alexander] wondered at the [beauty] of the garden with the four [rivers] flowing out of it, and these are [Pison], Gihon, Tigris, and the Euphrates" (=Genesis 2: 10-14).[6] Only in the Coptic is there this verbatim scriptural gloss.[7] There follows the familiar device of entering the darkness with an exit strategy provided by mares that can stay within hearing of their foals' cries.[8] In the subsequent adventure, in which Alexander (famous for his πόθος) is thrice addressed by a voice warning him to be satisfied,[9] he takes along three companions, named Menander, Selpharios, and Diatrophē. These three characters are, as a group, found only in the Coptic version, and, if we read in order, we have already met them in fragment 4, which narrates their reactions to the false rumor that Alexander has died from having been thrown into a chasm or ‘Chaos’ by an enemy ruler. (In fact a man-sized stone has been substituted for our hero.) Their names still continue to puzzle modern-day readers of the Coptic-language version.

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[6] Used liturgically in the *Grand Euchologe du Monastère Blanc*, ed. E. Lanne (Paris 1958) 308-309.

[7] Note the difference from Tigris-Euphrates-Nile in *Historia Alexandri Magni*, ed. W. Kroll (Berlin 1958) 75.15-18.

[8] Cf. *Der griechische Alexanderroman: Rezension β*, ed. L. Bergson (Stockholm/Uppsala 1965) 134, 199; even in the late ps.-James of Sarug version in E.A. Wallis Budge, *The*

‘Menander’, if historical, would have been one of Alexander’s Companions mentioned in both Arrian and Ps.-Callisthenes.[10] Von Lemm thought the character had been conflated by the Christian redactor with the later Menander, author of the popular school text the *Sententiae*,[11] but this makes little sense.[12] Let him remain for the time being as a connection with ‘real’ history. ‘Selpharios’ is harder to unpack: I once wondered if it might be a Grecising back-formation from the Coptic ⲥⲱⲗⲡ ‘to decide’, hence ‘decisive’, with a Byzantine Greek agent suffix. I now rather think it is a deformation of *sellarios* (σελλάριος), ‘Cavalryman’, which is a known Byzantine term and fits the character. Finally, ‘Diatrophē’ (διατροφή) is a noun known from, though not very common in, the administrative vocabulary of Byzantine Egypt. It means ‘living support allowance’, either maintenance for an official (*P.Cairo Maspero* I 67058) or an item in matrimonial negotiations (*P.Cairo Maspero* I 67006, *P.Lond.* V 1708; all 6th century). This invented trio – a wise man, a military man, and an administrator – play their parts in the school aspect of the story as it was copied by students in Byzantine Egypt and later.

We do have papyrus evidence of the school use of the Alexander tale in Egypt:[13] favorite episodes used in teaching seem to have been the imagined letters – perfect material for assigning school compositions – and the encounter with the Indian gymnosophists and their formulaic riddles. By the

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History of Alexander the Great (Cambridge 1889, repr. Amsterdam 1976) 172. (Jouanno, *Naissance*, 291-292 n. 166 dates this text to the first half of the 7th century.)

[9] Cf. *Alexanderroman*, ed. Bergson, 202.14-17.

[10] Menandros 5 in *PW* 15.1:706-707; Jouanno, *Naissance*, 407-408.

[11] Hence he restored fragment 4 v lines 1-2 to read ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲧⲟ[ⲫⲓⲗⲟⲥⲟⲫ]ⲟⲥ, “first philosopher”. Unfortunately after the first omicron nothing remains in the damaged right margin.

[12] But cf. Jouanno, *Naissance*, 348, 407-408 n. 73 (cf. 401).

[13] Jouanno, *Naissance*, 19-20 with 43 nn. 92-93, 44 nn. 96-97; 25 with 47-48 n. 151; *Alexanderroman*, ed. Bergson, ix; R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton 2001) 236-36.

Byzantine-Coptic period the ‘four friends of Alexander’ (Antiochus, Seleucus, Philip, and Philo; or, alternatively, Ptolemy, Seleucus, Antigonus, and Antipater)[14] have become three, our Menander, Selpharios, and Diatrophē. And in a papyrus apparently known to von Lemm but surprisingly not made much of by him, we have evidence of a school pupil executing a practice exercise involving this very episode. Moscow, Pushkin Museum, Copt. 52 is an opisthograph fragment[15] having on its → side the Coptic alphabet (the Greek alphabet plus the six additional Coptic-specific letters)[16] and on its ↑ side, in the same hand, the three names of Alexander, Selpharios, and Diatrophe, plus what may be part of a verb from the dream-interpretation episode (fragment 4). The papyrus is clearly post-conquest[17] since on the → side the other way up are a few Arabic letters,[18] probably indicating that the fragment was cut from an Arabic document for re-use in school exercise-writing. So someone at the apprentice-writing stage of using Coptic was learning the names of Alexander’s companions that were in the version familiar at the time.

Finally, let us consider a section found only in the Coptic-language version, the ‘testament of Selpharios’ in fragment 6 (fol. 29rv of the Berlin manuscript).[19] In the Coptic text as it has survived we have no version of ‘Alexander’s will’, the letter to the Rhodians,[20] though one has made it into the (5th-century?) Armenian version.[21] What we do have is the will of his two companion Selpharios, composed, we infer, in the interval between two campaigns against the Persians. It too is in epistolary form: though the opening, which in Byzantine/Coptic-style notarial form would have named the framer and the addressee(s) and added ‘being in sound mind, not under duress’ clauses,[22] is not preserved, the framer repeatedly says ‘I greet N. and N.’, including, by name, his son, Phileas (ⲫⲏⲗⲓⲁ or ⲫⲩⲗⲓⲁ). This of course is well-known phrasing in Coptic letters[23] and wills. Selpharios himself states that he has written the ⲇⲓⲁⲑⲡⲕⲡ (v. l. 14) ‘with his very own hand’ (ll. 10-11), a phrase often found in Coptic legal phraseology when applicable.[24]

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[14] Jouanno, *Naissance*, 387-388.

[15] A. Elanskaya, *The Literary Coptic Manuscripts in the A.S. Pushkin State Fine Arts Museum in Moscow* (Leiden 1994) 163 (no. 19), pl. LVIII. The editor cites von Lemm, *Koptische Miszellen* 1343-1345, but in von Lemm’s 1903 publication he does not go into the implications.

[16] See Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 164-167, 181; eadem, *Writing, Teachers and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta 1996) 37-40, 176-184, 187-191 (nos. 9-40, 60-76), pls. 406; M. Hasitzka, *Neue Texte und Dokumentation zum Koptisch-Unterricht* (Vienna 1990) 47-54 (nos. 53-72), pls. 21-27.

[17] Elanskaya says 10th-11th century, which is about as late as possible for papyrus as opposed to parchment or paper.

[18] My colleague Professor Irfan Shahîd is in process of deciphering them and I extend him advance thanks.

[19] Translation in Maspero, *Stories*, 251-252.

[20] *Historia*, ed. Kroll, 138-144: explicitly termed a διαθήκη, the correct technical term in law.

[21] *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes*, trans. A.M. Wolohojian (New York 1969) 153-155.

The text is floridly rhetorical, composed in the style popular in Copto-Byzantine and post-Byzantine wills.[25] While reminiscent of the emotional style in the ‘Alexander’s letters to his mother Olympias’ sections of some versions of the Romance,[26] this passage is also shot through with scriptural echoes and with resonances with Coptic funerary epigraphy.[27] After expressing sensuous longing for his son’s presence (r. ll. 10-12), the will’s narrator evokes the pastoral image of the happy family life of the birds of heaven feeding the young in their nests (ll. 13-20):[28] recalling not only Matthew 6:26 and also 13:32, the mustard-seed tree (itself also alluding in part to Ezekiel 31:6, Daniel 4:12, 21), but also Psalm 103:12 and Job 12:7-10, the latter an image used in Coptic wills.[29] Further, the writer echoes both Paul in 2 Cor. 2:4, 3:3 and David the Psalmist in Psalms 6:7, 41:3, 79:5, and 101:9. This kind of rhetoric is characteristic of Coptic testamentary texts from the 6th century through the 9th.

What was the audience for the Romance in Coptic Egypt, and how did it reach its audience? I suggest the ‘fan-fiction’-generating milieu of Coptic monasteries – perhaps indeed the White Monastery – as a good place to look.[30] In such a locus of production the Romance could well have been divided up into compositional episodes subsumed under sententious biblically-derived headings. An apprentice writer learned to copy the episodes of the Three Friends, and an experienced one composed a ‘document’ using the style and terminology (such as ⲭⲁⲣⲧⲏⲥ) familiar in his own time. Probably both students and teachers participated in an ongoing transmission that helped the text continue to grow in its own idiosyncratic ways.

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[22] W.C. Till, *Erbrechtliche Untersuchungen auf Grund der koptischen Urkunden* (Vienna 1954); L.S.B. MacCoull, *Coptic Legal Documents: Law as Vernacular Text and Experience in Late Antique Egypt* (Tempe 2009), e.g. 29-41.

[23] See A. Biedenkopf-Ziehner, *Untersuchungen zum koptischen Briefformular* (Würzburg 1983).

[24] MacCoull, *Coptic Legal Documents*, 121: “I have written this *diathēkē* with my very own hand.”

[25] E.g. MacCoull, *Coptic Legal Documents*, 71-77, 88-92, 120-126, 138-140.

[26] Jouanno, *Naissance*, 392, 397-400; in the Armenian version, *Romance*, trans. Wolohojian, 186 (4).

[27] Early work by M. Cramer, *Die Totenklage bei den Kopten* (Vienna/Leipzig 1941) will be subsumed in and superseded by T.S. Richter’s forthcoming comprehensive work on Coptic epigraphy.

[28] Possibly restoring some form of ⲉⲩϩⲏⲙⲉⲣⲓⲁ in line 20 (?). The English version in Maspero, *Stories*, has “kindliness”.

[29] MacCoull, *Coptic Legal Documents*, 57, 73.

[30] See the papers in *Spätantike Bibliotheken: Leben und Lesen in den frühen Klöstern Ägyptens*, ed. C. Römer (Vienna 2008); and extrapolating from C. Kotsifou, “Books and book

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The Islamized Alexander in Chinese Geographies and Encyclopaedias

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Until now, Alexander narratives from the very eastern extremity of the Eurasian continent have attracted little attention in comparison to various versions of the Alexander Romance in Europe and the Middle East. When and how was information on Alexander transmitted into China and Japan?

The eastward transmission of the Alexander Romance went beyond Persia, as is already known. Studies have been done on the Mongolian version, Central Asian turkic version, and Malay version of the Alexander Romance.[1] However till now, a full blown Chinese version of the Ps.-Callisthenes Alexander Romance depicting his whole life has not been discovered. We suppose that there was not much historical information about him until translations of world histories written by European missionaries in China. We start finding the name “Alexander” transcribed in Chinese characters – 亜歴山太 (*Yalishantai*), 亜力山大 (*Yalishanda*), 歴山王 (*Lishan wang* = *King Lishan*) – in writings from the Qing period (1644-1912).

What we do have in Chinese (and Japanese) literature, before the introduction of European historiography, are fragments of the Alexander narrative, not under Alexander’s name, but in its Islamic garb, as Dhū ’l-Qarnayn, “the two horned one.”

Here, let us give a brief explanation of who this Dhū ’l-Qarnayn is. A Judeo-Christian version of the Alexander romance seemed to have been current in Arabia at the time of birth of Islam. The story was partly incorporated into the *Quran* where he appears as Dhū ’l-Qarnayn, the two-horned one in Sūrat 18 (The Cave). In the *Quran*, Dhū ’l-Qarnayn is an enigmatic figure who goes to the Western and Eastern extremities of the world to

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[1] For the Mongolian version cf. Poppe 1957, and Cleaves 1959. Turkic version cf. Dankoff 1973, Dankoff 1992. Malay version cf. Leeuwen 1937, and Lombard 1994.

The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East, 263–274

spread the faith of God, and builds a great wall to prevent the invasion of the Yājūj and Mājūj, who are the barbaric peoples equivalent to the Biblical Gog and Magog. In the *Quran*, Dhū ’l-Qarnayn is a very abstract and allegorical character and lacks any concrete historical association to Alexander.

Early Muslim traditions (*ḥadīth*) included in later exegetic literature, such as the *Tafsīr* of Ṭabarī, tell more extensive narratives around this figure (Yamanaka 2007). And in some of these traditions, a clear association with the name al-Iskandar (Alexander) is pointed out. These were also tales from the Alexander romance that passed through the filter of Judeo-Christian messianic literature, and integrated into monotheistic view of the history of the world. Consequently, in the Islamic world, “the two-horned” became an epithet of Alexander, and he is called so not only in religious writings but in different genres of texts in Arabic and Persian; histories, geographies, encyclopedias, etc.[2]

The possibly oldest of the Chinese texts that mention Dhū ’l-Qarnayn dates from the Sung period (960-1279). In the *Zhufanzhi* 諸蕃志 (Records of Various Barbarians), written by Zhao Rukuo 趙汝适 in 1226, we have two passages that concern us. The first one is about Alexandria, the city that Alexander built in Egypt. In the text, the passage follows the description of *mei-si-li* 勿斯里 which comes from the Arabic word *Miṣr* that designates Egypt.

> The country of *·at-kən-da* belongs to *mei-si-li* (Egypt). According to tradition, in olden times a stranger (異人), *dzo-k‘at-ni* 徂葛尼 by name, built on the shore of the sea a great tower under which the earth was dug out and two rooms were made, well connected and very well secreted. In one vault was grain, in the other were arms. The tower was two hundred chang high. Four horses abreast could ascend to two-thirds of its height. In the centre of the building was a great well connecting with the big river.[3]
>
> To protect it from surprise by troops of other lands, the whole country guarded this tower that warded off the foes. In the upper and lower parts of it twenty thousand men could readily be stationed to guard, or to sally forth to fight. On the summit there was a wondrous great mirror; if war-ships of other countries made a sudden attack, the mirror detected them beforehand, and the troops were ready in time for duty.

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[2] Cf. chapter 2 of Yamanaka 2009.

[3] Cf. Hirth 1894: 52, notes 3 and 5.

> In recent years there came a foreigner, who asked to be given work in the guard-house of the tower; he was employed to sprinkle and sweep. For years no one entertained any suspicion of him, when suddenly one day he found an opportunity to steal the mirror and throw it into the sea, after which he made off. (Zhao Rukuo 1: 17; Hirth and Rockhill trans.: 146 [transliteration by present author])

The name of the ‘stranger’ who built the great tower, *dzo-k‘at-ni* 徂葛尼, is said to be the Chinese transliteration of the Arabic Dhū ’l-Qarnayn.

The second passage is about the land where the sun sets that is called *ḍa-pıet-ṣa* 茶弼沙. Here there is no mention of the name *dzo-k‘at-ni,* but as we shall see later, posterior parallel texts relate the land of the setting sun to him.

> The capital of the country of *ḍa-pıet-ṣa* is over a thousand li square. […]
>
> The country is resplendent with light, for it is the place where the sun goes down. In the evening when the sun sets, the sound of it is infinitely more terrifying than that of thunder, so every day a thousand men are placed at the gates who, as the sun goes down, mingle with the sound of the (sinking) sun that of the blowing of horns and the beating of gongs and drums. If they did not do this, the women with child would hear the sound of the sun and would die of fright. (Zhao Rukuo 1: 18; Hirth and Rockhill trans.: 13)

Zhao Rukuo often quotes an earlier geographical text from 1178, the *Lingwai daida* 嶺外代答 (Representative Answers from the Regions Beyond the Mountains) by Zhou Qufei 周去非 (1135-1189).[4] However, besides a rather extensive passage on *da-shi* 大食, that is, the Arabs, Zhou Qufei does not report much on Egypt nor on *ḍa-pıet-ṣa.*[5] So Zhao Rukuo must have relied on a different source for his accounts. The fact that the author of the *Zhufanzhi* was an *“Inspector of Foreign Trade* (*Shi-bo-si* 市舶司) in Quanzhou of Fujian (Hirth and Rockhill: 35), one of the largest seaports in China at that time, suggests that his possible informants were Muslim traders or navigators who provided him with accounts on places along the maritime trade route between China and the Islamic countries. And indeed, we do find in Arabic and Persian narratives similar to the Chinese ones quoted above.

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[4] He was a county official in Guilin, in present day Guangxi Autonomous Region.

[5] He only writes ‘How many ten thousands of miles the distance is to Morokko and Egypt and other countries is unknown. 黙伽國勿斯里等國其遠也不知其幾萬里矣’ (Zhou Qufei 3: 21)

However, before tracing the possible sources of information in Arabic and Persian texts, we would like to point out the later development of the same narrative in some parallel Chinese and Japanese texts from the Yuan and Ming periods.

In a geography from the Yuan period (1271-1368), *Yiyuzhi* 異域志 (Record of Strange Countries) from 1366 by Zhou Zhizhong 周致中, we find a similar passage. But in this text, the land of the setting sun is actually associated with the name of *dzo-k'at-ni.*

> *Ṣa-pıet-ṣa* is the land where the Sun sets in the West. There was a foreigner by the name of *dzo-k'at-ni* who came here and established writing [put up an inscription?]. Every night, when the sun set, the noise was like thunder. The king gathered a thousand people on the fortress to blow horns, beat gongs and drums, in order to mingle with the sound of the (sinking) sun. If they did not do this, people would all die of fright. There are rarely people who reach this place. (Zhou Zhizhong 1.6: 22)

The description of their attire and houses is omitted, but instead *dzo-k'at-ni* is introduced as a "foreigner" *yi-ren* 異人 who came and established writing in this remote land where people rarely reach.

About Egypt, the *Yiyuzhi* gives an abridgement of the account from the *Zhufanzhi*, and mentions especially the flooding of the Nile and the strange old man that appear from the river to give omen of the year.[6] Then he briefly notes that "In ancient times *dzo-k'at-ni* built a temple (廟 *miao* instead of 大塔 *da-ta* meaning great tower). On top of it was a mirror. If soldiers came to steal from other lands, the mirror would reflect them in advance."

These texts from the *Yiyuzhi,* and shortened versions of the accounts from the *Zhufanzhi* are found later in several Ming works of which we will just mention the late Ming illustrated encyclopaedia, *Sancaituhui* 三才圖會 (Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms of Heaven, Earth and Man) compiled by Wang Qi 王圻 and Wang Siyi 王思義, in 1607. The Chinese text was copied almost word for word by a Japanese physician from Osaka, Terashima Ryōan in the *Wakan sansai zue* 和漢三才図会 (Sino-Japanese Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms), published in 1712. The wording is identical with the addition of Japanese pronunciation signs. But the illustrations seem to differ, as can be seen in figs. 1 and 2.

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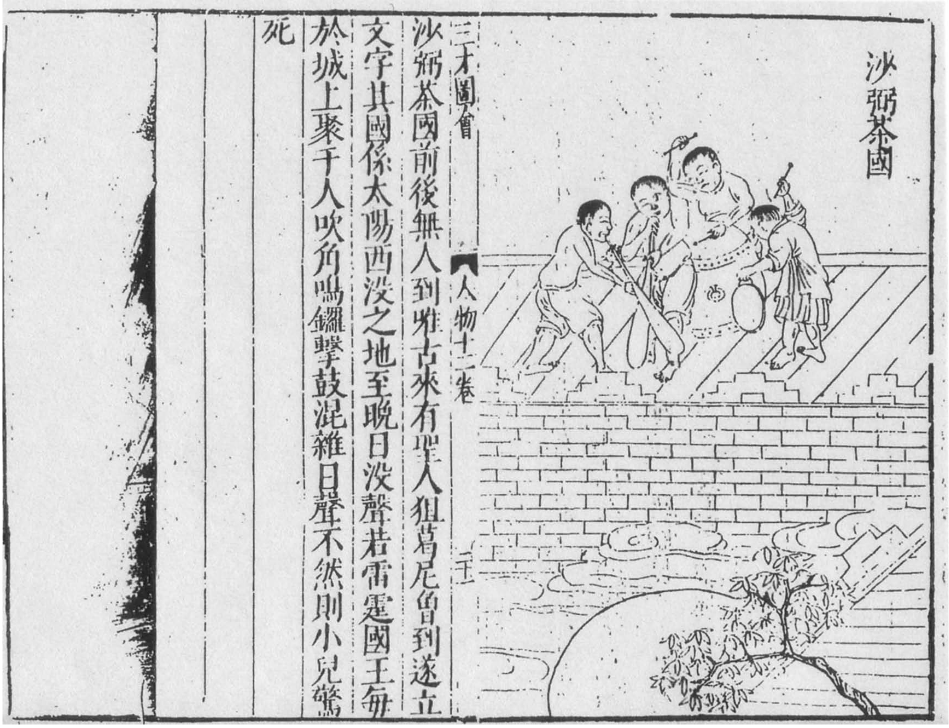
[6] This might be referring to a remnant of an Osiris-River God cult.

The account on the temple with the mirror in Egypt is identical to the one in the *Yiyuzhi*, but there is a slight change in wording in the other passage about *dzo-k'at-ni* / *ju –ge-ni* coming to the setting place of the sun.

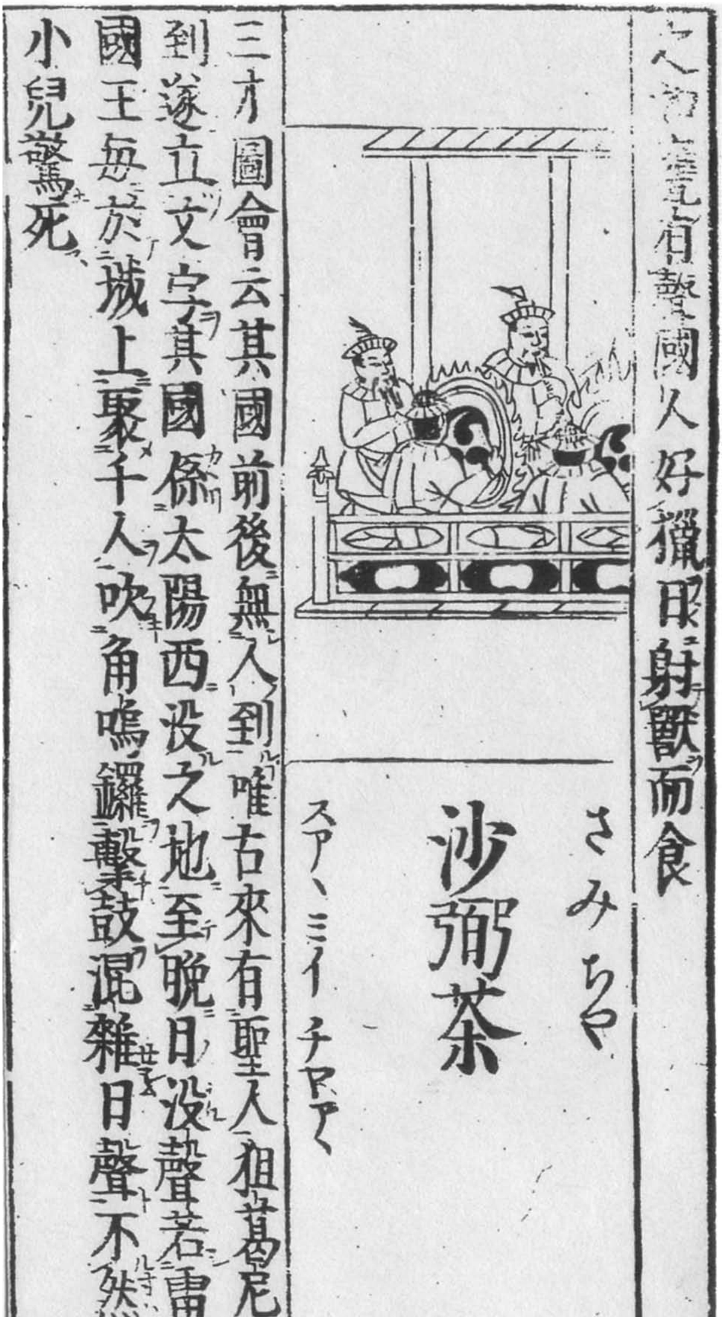
> *Sha-bi-cha* 沙弼茶. No person reached it before or after, except in ancient times there was a holy person *Ju-ge-ni* 聖人狙葛尼 who once arrived there and established writing. This country was close to the place where the sun set in the West. When the evening came, the sound of the sun setting was like thunder. The king gathered a thousand people on the fortress to blow horns, beat gongs and drums, in order to mingle with the sound of the (sinking) sun. If they did not do this, children would all die of fright. (Wang Qi, renwu 12: 826)



三才圖會　人物十二卷　二十

沙弼茶國前後無人到惟古來有聖人狙葛尼曾到遂立文字其國係太陽西沒之地至晚日沒聲若雷霆國王每於城上聚千人吹角鳴鑼擊鼓混雜日聲不然則小兒驚死

Fig. 1. Illustration of Sha-bi-cha in *Sancaituhui*.



之人[illegible]有聲國人好獵取射獸而食

さみちや

沙彌茶

スア、ミイ チヤア

三才圖會云其國前後無人到唯古來有聖人徂葛尼曾到遂立文字其國係太陽西沒之地至晚日沒聲若雷霆國王每於城上聚千人吹角鳴鑼擊鼓混雜日聲不然則小兒驚死

Fig. 2. Illustration of Samicha in *Wakan sansei zue.*

A very curious point is that whereas in the *Yiyuzhi* he was a simple “foreigner” 異人 *yi-ren,* in the *Sancaituhui* he turns into a “holy person” or “sage” 聖人 *sheng-ren.*[7] “Holy person” corresponds with the image of the Islamic Dhu ’l-Qarnayn who is endowed with special powers by God to spread the faith to uncivilized regions of the world.

This brings us to the second part of the paper. What were the possible sources for these Chinese texts and how did the information travel?

The description of Alexandria and the ‘great tower’ that housed the enemy detecting mirror can be found in many Arabic and Persian geographical and historical writings. We cannot cite all of the examples here, but the mention in the *Zhufanzhi* about the foreign spy that infiltrated the tower as a cleaning man then sabotaged the mirror by throwing it down into the sea actually points to a particular source.

It is the 10th century encyclopaedic work called the *Murūj al-dhahab wa maʿādin al-jawhar* (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems) by Masʿūdī (d. 956). He had actually visited Alexandria and gives an extensive description of the city. He does not just give his own eye-witness reports but bases some of his accounts on information collected from Egyptian authorities in history and the citizens of Alexandria. He also gives a rich description on the structure and the history of the light house of Pharos (the arabic text calls it *manāra,* as in minaret). He observes that the tower is half ruined at the time he saw it and gives the following explanation of which we will give just an abridged summary.

There came a Rūmī (Byzantine) slave to the Umayyad Caliph Walid I (705-715) who claimed to possess a book of hidden treasures. He won the favour of the Caliph by digging up treasures in several locations in Syria. He inflamed the Caliph’s greed by telling him that Alexander had built the Pharos of Alexandria and constructed an underground treasury to hide all the treasures of the world that he collected. He put a great mirror that would reflect approaching enemies so that the soldiers could protect the treasure and the city. Upon hearing this, the Caliph sent this slave together with his soldiers to Alexandria. They partly destroyed the tower and broke the mirror. As soon as the deed was done, the slave took off and escaped by a boat that was waiting for him. He was a spy sent by the Byzantine emperor. (Masʿūdī, *Murūj* 2: 434-6)

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[7] This change must have happened much earlier because the *Zengxiu Piyaguangyao* 增修埤雅廣要 (Piya Expanded and Amended), a recompilation of the dictionary of Lu Dian 陸佃（1042-1102）by Niu Zhong 牛衷 from 1457, already has *shengren* 聖人. (Niu Zhong 6: 37)

The Chinese text is much more simplified, and the culprit is not the Caliphs treasure hunter, but a humble cleaning man. But the basic analogy is clear. By the way, there is also a parallel text in the *Tuhfat al-albāb* by an Andalusian geographer and traveler, Gharnāṭī (1080-1169/70).

This episode in Masʿūdī is not historical, but an entertaining tale. The Pharos had actually been destroyed by the several earthquakes and tsunamis that Alexandria had experienced. The Pharos seemed to have been functioning still at the time of the Muslim conquest of Egypt in the 7th century, but the upper part and the mirror was destroyed by the earthquake of 796 (Ambraseys, Melville, and Adams 1994: 26). Masʿūdī himself lived through a large-scale earthquake in Fustat (near Cairo) in 956 and says in his *Kitāb al-tanbīh* (Book of Admonition) that at that time 30 more cubits fell from the tower (Masʿūdī *Tanbīh* 48-50).

Blaming the destruction of the Pharos on Byzantine intrigue might actually reflect the rivalry that existed between the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Alexandria that date back to pre-Islamic times. There are Arabic traditions that preserve a rumor among the early Muslims in Egypt that tell that the tower in Alexandria was there to keep a watch on the Byzantine capitol (quite like the Two Towers in the *Lord of the Rings*). The rather fantastic or entertaining tendency of many of the stories collected by Masʿūdī perhaps attests to their oral origins. The tale of the Byzantine spy who destroyed the mirror of Alexandria may be a local Alexandrian invention. We could conjecture that a similar story had travelled from the port of Alexandria, transmitted by traders and navigators to Quanzhou in China.

Now let's turn to the second anecdote about *ḍa-pıet-ṣa,* the place of the setting sun. Hirth and Rockhill noted in their translation of the *Zhufanzhi*, that *ḍa-pıet-ṣa* comes from *Jābarsā* of Arabic geographies. *Jābars* (or *Jābals*, *Jābalsā*) is an imaginary city in the Western extremity of the world. It has a "sister city" in the extreme East called *Jābarq* (*Jābalq*, *Jābalqā*). They also appear in stories of the prophets,[8] where Jābalq and Jābars are the cities in the extreme West and extreme East where the People of Moses, ʿAd and Thamud, went and where their remnants live (cf. Miquel 1975 2: 507-508). The less imaginary geographies that deal only with real existing lands do not seem to mention them.

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[8] For example, Tabari 28-40 on remnants of Ad and Thamud (people of Moses) living in Jābalq and Jābars.

We have found two Persian texts that relate to the episode in the *Zhufanzhi,* about the noise of the sinking sun that distress the people. One is in the *Ajāyib al-makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creation) by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ṭūsī. This is a description of different lands and natural phenomena that was written in Persian sometime around 1160, under the Seljuqid ruler Tughril III (1177-1194).

> Jābalq: It is a city in the Eastern extremity, beyond which there are no cities. The heat is severe and people dwell in grottos. At the time of sun rise, the ocean comes to a boil and makes terrifying noises that tears people's hearts. They say that they beat drums fiercely, in order not to hear the sound because it was murderous. Actually, the sun only appeared from that side of the ocean at a long distance, but it is represented as if the sun came from within the ocean.
>
> Jābals: It is a city in the Western extremity. It has 1012 gates (sic. 12000 gates?). Every evening on each gate, 1000 men stand guard. Dhū 'l-Qarnayn reached this place and from there went to the land of darkness. He came to a place with light that was not from the sun. Then he saw a mountain with two pillars, on top of which were two birds. [...][9] Then Dhū 'l-Qarnayn went from the place to the extremity where the sun burnt the people, and then returned. (Tūsī 204)

Thus we have here the same story of the beating of the drums to wipe out the noise of the sun boiling the ocean. But curiously it is not at the setting place of the sun like in the Chinese text, but at Jābalq, the rising place of the sun. And Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is not associated with the beating of the drums but appears in connection with Jābals which in this case is in the West, and the entry point to the land of Darkness.

The other Persian text we would like to mention is somewhat closer to the Chinese version. It is found in the *Iskandarnāma* (Book of Alexander)*,* an epic poem on the life of Alexander by *Niẓāmī* (1141-1209). In the *Iqbālnāma* (Book of Fortune), or the second volume of the *Book of Alexander,* after visiting China, Alexander comes to a city white as camphor that lies at the place of the rising sun. The inhabitants there complain to Alexander how they are suffering from the clamour that the sun makes when it rises every morning from the sea. So Alexander saves the people thus:

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[9] We omit the translation of a question-and-answer exchange between Dhū 'l-Qarnayn and mysterious birds.

Like silk cloth the night folded up the crimson. Suddenly the sun fell from this sky.
The king lied down with the guardians. Until morning he rested his mind from trouble.
When the rays of morning appeared from the earth, he heard the tone of the clamour of the ocean.
Perhaps it was last night's goblet (sun) that had fallen, and made a noise at dawn.
From horror of the nerve-wracking clamour, the king shouted like his own kettle-drum (*kūs*) during battle.
He ordered that the troops agitate, and all at once they struck the drum (*nawbat*).
The roaring of the drum and the clamour of the kettle-drum took the bell off from the neck of the pregnant woman[10]
Compared to the sound of a drum that they raised, the other noise seemed like wind to them.
In this way, all morning the kettle-drum kept the world in tumult.
The whole city was enraged from that sound. They went about agitated as if it was the day of resurrection.
They ran to the drums when the clamour came, like the Antichrist, young and old, they were on the drums.
And then a wonder occurred. The sound of his instrument overcame the other sound.
When the world-illuminating (sun) came to the meridian, from there the sun passed quickly.
Every man and woman kissed the ground before the king, and they stopped the way to show their wish
that of these filthy looking drums, how great would it be if only a drum remained in place.
If his instrument would rumble, the clamour of the ocean would become one with its noise.
The world-conqueror, when it came to the time of kissing hands (farewell), he bestowed several ass-loads of kettle-drums to them.
In that city from that day on, it became a habit that at dawn the drums would be stirred.
The king also established this as a custom, that every early morning would start with a drum.

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[10] Meaning :'she does not have to prepare for travel / flee'.

Niẓāmī was an extremely erudite poet versed in different branches of science and literature. He made a coherent synthesis out of the different types of information that he had collected and wove a grand tapestry out of the different threads. Ṭūsī, the previous author of the Persian geography that we mentioned, was a contemporary of Niẓāmī, so he may have also read his *Ajāyib al-makhlūqāt*.

There are still questions that remain open to speculation on how these tales travelled to China. More examples from other Arabic or Persian texts must be compared. But, for the moment, as a conclusion, I would like to emphasize the interesting phenomenon of the reversal of the West and the East in the Persian and the Chinese texts. In the Chinese texts, it was at the setting point of the sun that Dhū ’l-Qarnayn appears and figures out a way to appease the inhabitants’ distress from the thunder-like noise of the sinking sun. In the Persian texts, it is the rising of the sun that makes the ocean boil and creates a huge clamour. For Muslims, the Maghreb, literally “the place where the sun sets”, was part of the Islamic world. But of course from the Chinese point of view, the setting place of the sun is a far more exotic and marginal place, whereas the land of the rising sun was for them a neighbour. So, at some point in the process of transmission, the marvellous tale was bounced back to ‘the other side’ of the continent. The most improbable story is associated to the most remote corner of the known world, which was the extreme East for the Muslims, and the extreme West for the Chinese.

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Part 4

Themes

Sekandar,
Dragon-Slayer

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Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* or *Book of Kings* of ca. 1000 AD contains a number of dragon-slaying stories, and two of them resemble each other closely in their focal vignettes: that of Sekandar's (Alexander's) slaying of a dragon in a region adjacent to Abyssinia and that of Ardeshir's slaying of the Worm of Haftvad in Persia. What can we say of the archaeology of these narratives, and of their relationship?

Let us begin with Sekandar. The *Shahnameh* tells how Sekandar and his army reach a great and civilised city which welcomes him, and besides which he encamps. The people of the city warn Sekandar that the way forward is blocked by a terrible fire-breathing dragon that inhabits a mountain pass. Its poisonous breath rises up to the moon and sickens the birds that fly over. It can snatch up an elephant in two locks of its hair. Every night the locals must put out five oxen for the dragon to devour, in fear that it might otherwise turn its attention upon their town. Sekandar commands that food be withheld from the dragon for a day, and this is followed by a skirmish with it in which the dragon burns up a few of his men with its fiery breath, but eventually retreats before the sound of his war drums. Sekandar then devises a ruse. He has his men buy five oxen and has them skinned, with the heads being left on. He has the hides filled with poison and oil and then inflated. These are passed up the mountainside. As the dragon approaches, Sekandar can see that it resembles a huge dark cloud, with a purple tongue, blood-red eyes and a mouth that continuously sends forth blasts of fire. His soldiers roll the carcasses down to the dragon and it devours them at once. The poison bursts its intestines and spreads to its brain and its feet. It beats its head against the rocks in despair, and in the meantime the army issues a hail of arrows against it. The dragon eventually collapses in death. Sekandar leaves its body in situ, and leads his army on.[1]

One point that we should immediately make, although it is not as explicit as it might be in the *Shahnameh* narrative, is that the mixture destroys the dragon not only by matching its venom with poison, but also by matching its fieriness (itself also an imaginative extrapolation of the burning sensation caused by viper venom) with fire: it is the oil's role to take light from the dragon's own flames and combust within it. The reason for thinking this will become clear when we come to consider some comparative material. And indeed it is a recurring feature of dragon-fight narratives across cultures that these near-invincible creatures should only be defeatable by means of their own terrible weapons.

The most immediate source for this tale is a broadly similar and actually more detailed narrative of Alexander's slaying of a dragon in a region adjacent to Indian Prasiake in the Syriac version of the *Alexander Romance*, from which the Persian Alexander tradition in general is now recognised to derive. The Syriac version consists of a translation, thought to have been made in the seventh century AD, of a Greek version of the *Romance* closely related to the α recension, but exhibiting enough differences from it to be regarded as a unique representative of a separate recension, 'δ.'[2]

According to the Syriac narrative, Alexander comes to a people who tell him that his way across the mountain ahead will be blocked by a great god in the form of a dragon that lives in a temple beside a river. It is capable of sucking up an elephant with its breath, and often takes human victims. To keep the dragon in a basic condition of placation, a local man devoted to the service of the god takes it two oxen a day. These he deposits on the opposite bank of the river, their legs tied, and retreats to the top of the mountain above. In due course the dragon emerges from the temple and devours them. On hearing this, Alexander concludes to himself that the creature is not a god, but a wicked demon. Alexander takes a stand on the mountaintop to observe the creature's feeding custom. He sees that it resembles a cloud because of the fog of smoke emanating from its mouth, and he observes it sucking the oxen into its mouth from afar. Alexander then commands that on the next day it be given only small oxen, so that it will be all the more hungry on the following one. Hungry already on the second day after its inadequate meal, it crosses the river a second time, wandering around in search of more food, and on finding nothing threatens to come up the mountainside to where Alexander and his army are positioned, but they drive it back with a shout. On the third day Alexander orders that two huge oxen be prepared for the dragon. Their flesh is to be removed, and their hides filled with gypsum, pitch, lead and sulphur. The dragon crosses the river and inhales the two oxen at once, falling to the ground, its mouth agape, as the gypsum enters its belly, and uprooting trees with its thrashing tail. Alexander then orders brass balls to be heated with a smith's bellows and thrown into the creature's mouth. After receiving five balls, the beast shuts its mouth and dies. Alexander leads his army on.[3]

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[1] *Shahnameh* C.1331-4; translation at Davis 2006:506-8 and Warner and Warner 1912:vi,148-53. Davis 2006 is the modern standard English translation but, unlike Warner and Warner 1912, omits much, including many of the passages cited in this article. One must depend upon a diverse range of editions for the original Persian text: see Davis 2006:xxxv-xxxvi. Khaleghi-Motlagh 1988- will be standard when complete. We will have nothing to say here of Nizami's later twelfth-century account of Alexander's life, the *Iskandarnameh*, since Alexander does not enjoy a dragon-fight proper in it, though dragon imagery does pervade this text and indeed Alexander is often compared to a dragon himself in it (e.g. cantos 25.73, 26.12, 45.89, 47.67). For an English translation, see Clarke 1881.

[2] Stoneman 2008:232-3.

What, in turn, might the origin of this tale have been? At one level, its starting-point might have been the somewhat jejune dragon-fight given to Alexander in the α recension. The Greek A text and the Armenian translation of its lost but better counterpart describe his encounter with the Agathos Daimon (or Agathodaimon), 'Good Demon', serpent in connection with the foundation of Alexandria, the spirit of which, after its slaughter, came to preside over and protect the city. Here Alexander's architects mark the projected city out to extend between the rivers Drakōn ('Serpent') and 'Agathodaimon'. As they begin to build on this 'Middle Plain' a serpent (*drakōn*) which frequents the area keeps frightening the workmen, and they have to break off their work upon the creature's arrival. News of this is given to Alexander, and he gives the order that on the following day the serpent should be killed wherever it is caught. On receipt of this permission, the workmen get the better of the beast when it presents itself at the place subsequently known as the Stoa and kill it. Alexander then commands that it should have a precinct there, and buries the serpent. He also commands that the neighborhood should be garlanded in memory of the sighting of Agathos Daimon. When the serpent's heroon is being constructed a large host of snakes leaps out from one of the stones and crawls into the four private homes that have so far been constructed on the site. From this point on it becomes the practice of Alexandrian doorkeepers to admit these snakes (*opheis*) into houses as Agathoi Daimones, and on a certain festival day they are given gifts of porridge.[4]

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[3] *Syriac Alexander Romance* 3.7. For text and translation see Budge 1889, with translation of the relevant portion at 102-3.

As a dragon-slaying story, and as a dragon-slaying story fit for Alexander in the context of the fantastical *Romance*, this is less than satisfactory: the serpent in question appears to be more of a nuisance than an ultimate peril; the hero of the story does not even encounter it in person, but almost superciliously delegates the task to an unnamed and seemingly quite unheroic group of builders. One can well imagine that some consumers of the α recension might have felt that their king deserved a rather meatier dragon-fight. Can the Syriac fight be seen as a direct substitution for the Agathos Daimon fight? Possibly. On the one hand, the Agathos Daimon fight itself is missing from the Syriac version. On the other hand, three points of coincidence may be observed. First, as in the Agathos Daimon tale, the Syriac Alexander still does not come into direct contact with his dragon. But if he is still denied the title of martial hero in this regard, he can at least claim that of culture hero, for designing the ruse by which the dragon is defeated. Secondly, the Syriac narrative draws repeated and emphatic attention to the river that runs before the dragon's lair (to a greater degree, in fact, than my summary indicates). Yet this river seems to have no real role in its narrative, since it hardly constitutes any sort of barrier for the serpent or plays any role in its demise. Could this emphasis be a reminiscence of the rivers in the Agathos Daimon narrative, with one of which that dragon was directly identified? And thirdly, it is curious that the dragon should be said to live in a temple. Perhaps this is a reminscence of the heroon that Alexander had constructed for the slain Agathos Daimon in the α recension (however, other influences too may be at work here, as we shall see).

The climactic motif of the Syriac narrative is the destruction of the dragon by the feeding of substances to it that will undo it by exploiting its own signature weapon of fire. This is to be achieved through four of the five media fed to it. The gypsum presumably serves as a binding or carrier agent. The pitch, lead and sulphur fed to the dragon along with the gypsum are each designed to have deleterious effects when they come into contact with the dragon's own fire: the pitch will itself catch light and superheat the dragon; the lead will melt and stifle it from within; and the sulphur will give off its typical acrid and choking fumes. The molten brass balls require no further exegesis.

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[4] *Alexander Romance* (A) 1.31.7, 1.32.5-7; *Alexander Romance* (Armenian) §§ 86-8 Wolohojian. The text is heavily corrupt and disputable throughout. For discussion see Jouanno 2002:75-6, 105-8, Stoneman 2007:532-4, 2008:56-8. The reconstruction of the figure of Agathos Daimon and his cult is quite difficult because of the extremely fragmentary nature of the literary evidence (and indeed the ambiguity of much of the iconographic evidence). See Harrison 1912:277-316, Cook 1914-40:ii.2, 1125-9, Ganschinietz/Ganszyniec 1918 and 1919, Jakobsson 1925 especially 151-75, Rohde 1925:207-8 n.133, Tarn 1928, Taylor 1930, Fraser 1972:i, 209-11, with associated notes, Quaegebeur 1975:170-6 and *passim*, Mitropoulou 1977:155-68 Dunand 1969, 1981, with bibliography, Pietrzykowski 1978, Sfameni Gasparro 1997.

This motif can be contextualised against earlier Greek dragon-slaying narratives. Almost certainly it will have originated in the pagan era. The twelfth-century AD Byzantine scholar Tzetzes preserves a comparable tradition in relation to Bellerophon's slaying of the Chimaera. This is presumably, like the bulk of this respectable scholar's material, Classical in origin, though we could never hope to prove it. Already in the *Iliad* the Chimaera is fire-breathing compound dragon, her body being amalgamated from serpent (*drakōn*), lion and, improbably, goat, the last element supposedly giving it its name.[5] Now according to Tzetzes, Bellerophon, who fought the Chimaera from the back of winged Pegasus, overcame the monster by tipping his spear with lead and thrusting it down her throat, whereupon the point melted at her own heat and killed her.[6]

A Judaeo-Christian precedent is provided by the Septuagint's tiny book Bel and the Dragon. A lost Aramaic version of this, thought to have been composed in the late second century BC, survives in two Greek translations and is conventionally classed amongst the Old Testament Apocrypha. It tells two parallel tales in which Daniel deflates false gods worshipped by the Babylonians under the Persian king Cyrus, Bel (Baal) and a dragon (*drakōn*). In the second of these Daniel declares that he will kill the dragon that Cyrus and his people worship without a knife or a staff: 'And Daniel took pitch and fat and hair and boiled them until they congealed. He then made cakes (*mazai*) and gave them into the mouth of the dragon. Upon eating them the dragon burst open. And Daniel said, "Behold the object of your worship!"' The angry Babylonians accordingly throw Daniel into the famous lions' den.[7] Now, for all that the immediate source of this tale was composed in Aramaic, the culture of feeding *mazai* (normally barley-cakes, drenched in honey) to sacred *drakontes* was itself a distinctively Greek one,[8] and so the

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[5] Homer *Iliad* 6.179-83.

[6] Tzetzes on [Lycophron] *Alexandra* 17.

[7] Bel and the Dragon (Theodotion version) 23-7.

[8] Aristophanes *Clouds* 508, Lucian *Dialogues of the Dead* 10, Pausanias 9.39, Maximus of Tyre 8.2, Pollux *Onomasticon* 6.76, Aelian *NA*. 11.16, Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 8.19, Hesychius s.v. μαγίδες, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. μαγίς, *Suda* s.v. μελιτοῦττα,

Aramaic text must itself have emanated from a strongly Hellenised milieu (the agreement of the two Greek translations on the details of the cakes and indeed all else precludes the hypothesis that the Aramaic narrative has been substantially reworked for a Hellenic audience only in the process of translation). Here it is the pitch and fat that provide the combustible substances that will overheat the dragon from within. The hair ostensibly serves the purpose of binding or kindling, but it gives pause for thought. Could the hair have offered the starting-point for the subsequent notion of concealing the combustible materials within animal hides? Or is the Daniel narrative itself rather derivative of an already-existing story-type with ox-hides, and has it repackaged the hides as hair-ingredients in order to be able to feed the dragon with something that resembles the cakes the Greeks gave to their sacred snakes? In the latter case, we would have to assume that the δ recension of the *Romance* was dependent upon parallel narratives of dragon-slayers in which the ox-hide motif remained intact, for all that the Daniel narrative may also have been an influence upon it in its own right.[9]

Indeed a Judaeo-Christian agenda does press through the Syriac narrative, and this becomes explicit in Alexander's conclusion about the dragon he is to face: 'Then I bethought me that it was not a god but a phantasy of wicked demons.'[10] The location of the dragon in a temple suggests that it is being identified with one of the popular pagan anguiform deities of late antiquity, such as Asclepius, Glycon or indeed Agathos Daimon himself (all actually very benign in their own religious contexts) for Alexander to destroy in the role of Christian saint avant-la-lettre. We may compare the Latin *Acts of Silvester*, now thought to have been produced first in the late fourth century AD, that tells, in highly fictionalised form, how the people of Rome were afflicted by the breath of a dragon that lived in the bottom of a cave there, reached by a descent of 365 steps, and that was maintained by the Vestal virgins (in fact the cult of the Vestals has been merged here with the serpent-based cult of Juno-Sospita of Lanuvium, in which virgin devotees

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scholl. Aristophanes *Clouds* 508a-d. As is clear from these texts, a *melitoutta* was the more particular term for a *maza* drenched in honey.

[9] Nöldeke 1890:22 and Zimmerman 1958:439 hold that the Daniel story had a direct impact actually on the *Shahnameh*'s tale of Sekandar's dragon-slaying. Zimmerman 1958 contends that ultimately behind the Daniel story in turn lies the account in the early second-millennium BC Middle-Babylonian Akkadian *Epic of Creation* or *Enūma eliš* (tablet iv; trans. Dalley 2000:252-3) of the storm-god Marduk's killing of the chaos-dragon Tiamat by means of forcing a whirl-wind into its mouth. But the argument is contrived, and asks us to accept quite a chain of arbitrary hypotheses.

[10] Trans. Budge 1889:107.

did, according to pagan sources, carry cakes down to a serpent in his cave). Challenged by some pagans to deal with the problem as a proof of the truth of his religion, Silvester, guided by prayer and a vision of St Peter, descends the steps and chains shut a pair of doors at their foot, locking the dragon and its breath in forever.[11] Ancient Greek dragons had always been known for the production of bad airs, either with their venomous breath or with the stench of their rotting corpse once slain. Hyginus, for example, tells us that the Lernean Hydra 'had such power in her venom that she could kill men just by breathing on them.[12] And the threat posed by the rotting carcass of a dragon had been known since the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*'s account of Apollo's slaying of Python.[13] But it was in Christian literature above all that the notion that the living dragon could produce a broad pall of pollution with its smoky or pestilential breath was strongly developed. In addition to the Silvester narrative just mentioned, we may point in particular to the *Acts of Philip*, a text composed in Phrygian Hierapolis in the mid to late fourth century AD. Amongst the many dragons and serpents encountered and overcome by Philip and his team in this text, one stands out. A great dark wind blows up, out of which emerges a great dark dragon, a hundred cubits long, with a belly consisting of sparks and embers of bronze and accompanied by a host of smaller snakes. Philip counteracts the great smoke by sprinkling holy water into it, and then calls down God's lightning to kill the creature itself.[14]

For what it is worth, it is possible to find Greek precedents behind other dragon-slaying tales in the *Shahnameh*. Esfandyar kills a dragon by having his carpenters build a special chariot covered over by a box from which swords project and allowing the dragon to suck it into its gullet.[15] This recalls Pausanias' tale of Menestratus killing the dragon of Thespiae by feeding himself to it in a breastplate covered in fish-hooks.[16] When the Indian king Shangal finds himself intimidated by the manliness of Bahram Gur, the Persian envoy he is hosting at court, he tries to unburden himself of him by setting him the impossible task of killing a dragon so great that it can wrap an elephant in its tail. Bahram Gur kills it by pinning shut its mouth with arrows dipped in poison and milk. As the venom leaks out of it, it sets fire to the surrounding bushes. He hacks of its head and returns it to Shangal, who makes peace with him.[17] This looks like a salute, again, to the Homeric tale of Bellerophon's battle against the fire-breathing Chimaera, at the behest of his host, the king of Lycia, wherein the king is reconciled with him after his unanticipated success.[18] Bahram Gur also goes up against another dragon which is said, oddly, to resemble a lion with a woman's breasts. After killing it he hacks it up and retrieves the body of a youth from its innards.[19] This curious cul-de-sac motif looks like a dim reflection of the motif found in the early Greek hagiographic dragon-slaying tale found in the *Acts of Thomas*, in which St Thomas slays a dragon and then proceeds to revivify the youth it has just killed.[20] Katayun, daughter of the king of Rum (the Graeco-Roman world) falls in love with the dispossessed Persian prince Goshtasp. Her father reluctantly agrees to let her marry him, but exiles the couple. They are able to return to the king's favour when Goshtasp slays a troublesome wolf and the Dragon of Mt Sakila. As he kills the latter, he hacks two of its teeth from its mouth. But the corpse is commandeered by the wicked courtier Ahran, who brings it before the king and claims the hand of another of his daughters on the basis that he had slain it himself. The king subsequently recognises Goshtasp's achievement when he produces the teeth.[21] This tale (the folktale type of which will be familiar to readers of Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*) strongly resembles the Greek tale of Alcathous, who

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[11] *Actus Silvestri* A (1), reproduced at Duchesne 1897:31-2 and B (1), reproduced at Pohlkamp 1983:11. For the cult of Juno Sospita, see Propertius 4.8.2-14 and Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11.16; the virgins are illustrated in the act of feeding cakes to their serpent on coins minted by L. Roscius Fabatus in 64 and 58 BC, for which see Sydenham 1952:152 no. 915 with plate 25.

[12] Hyginus *Fabulae* 30.3.

[13] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 300-6, 352-73.

[14] *Acts of Philip* 9 Amsler *et al.* = 102-6 Lipsius-Bonet.

[15] *Shahnameh* V.1591-4; translated at Warner and Warner 1912:v.125-8, omitted from Davis 2006.

[16] Pausanias 9.26.7-8. The motif of dragon-slayers going up against their quarry in spiked armour is a particularly vigorous one in British legend. It features in the tales of the Lambton Worm, the Dragon of Wantley, the White Snake of Mote Hill (Kirdkudbright),

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the Bisterne Dragon, the Nunnington Dragon and the Mordiford Dragon: see Simpson 1980:58-63, 69-75, 85-7, 118, 124-9, 133-6, with reproduction of most of the relevant source texts.

[17] *Shahnameh* C.1568-70; translated at Davis 2006:664-5, Warner and Warner 1912:vii.124-6.

[18] Homer *Iliad* 6.156-93.

[19] *Shahnameh* C.1513; translated at Warner and Warner 1912:vii.42-3, omitted from Davis 2006.

[20] *Acts of Thomas* 30-3. The *Acts of Thomas* appear to have been composed in Edessa in the 220s or 230s AD, possibly initially in Syriac: Bremmer 2001:77, with earlier scholarship. A similar feat is ascribed to St Andrew at Gregory of Tours *Life of Andrew* 19, at Bonnet 1885:827.

[21] *Shahnameh* V1457-80 (esp.V1473-7 for the dragon itself); translation at Warner and Warner 1912:iv, 329-52 (345-9 for the dragon), omitted from Davis 2006 (but cf. summary at 369).

slew the Cithaeronian lion for king Megareus of Megara, removing the beast's tongue. Again, wicked courtiers claimed the credit in the meantime, but Alcathous was able to confute them by producing the tongue. A version of this tale type may also underlie the myth of Perseus' slaying of the sea-monster to win Andromeda for bride, being refracted best in Ovid's account of it, with the wicked competing courtier Phineus.[22]

Let us turn now to the *Shahnameh*'s partly parallel account of Ardeshir's slaying of the Worm of Haftvad. According to this, Haftvad is originally a poor man of Kajaran. One day his daughter finds a small worm in a windfall apple. Recognising it to be a luck-bringing creature, she keeps it in her spindle case, where she feeds it with apple. At once she is able to spin twice as much as usual, and soon the family becomes rich as result of the luck conferred by the Worm. Eventually Haftvad is able to use his vast wealth to make himself tyrannical ruler of his region. He builds himself a castle from which he conquers a vast empire, good luck ever attending his army. Meanwhile, the Worm has constantly been growing. As it had outgrown its spindle case, Hadtvad had made a chest for it. As the family moves into the castle, he builds a large stone cistern for it there. Five years on again, it has grown to the size of an elephant. Its diet too has moved on from apple, to rice and now to milk and honey. Ardeshir grows concerned by this burgeoning empire and determines to put Haftvad down, but his initial military movements against him end in failure. Then two friendly brothers explain to Ardeshir that the Worm is in fact a manifestation of Ahriman and that he will need trickery to defeat it, and so he devises a ruse. Ardeshir approaches the castle with his lavish gifts and claims to be a rich merchant of Khorasan who has made his money by virtue of his devotion to the Worm, to which he has now come to pay his respects. He is admitted, makes the Worm's attendants drunk on wine, and pours molten lead down its throat, splitting its bowels open, with the cistern and the whole town surrounding the castle reverberating to the noise of the explosion. His talisman now gone, Haftvad's forces desert to Ardeshir, and the tyrant is soon captured and executed.[23]

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[22] Gottfried von Strassburg *Tristan* books 12, 14; the tale type is *ATU* no. 300. Alcathous: Dieuchidas of Megara *FGrH* 485 F10, Pausanias 1.41. Perseus: Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4.607-5.268, with Milne 1956:301-2, Hansen 2002:119-30 and Ogden 2008:97-8.

[23] *Shahnameh* C.1381-1391; translation at Davis 2006:544-53 and Warner and Warner 1912:vi, 232-45. The terrible Lambton Worm of British folktale similarly originates in a tiny worm found by chance (by fishing) that gradually grows to vast size over the years; for text see Simpson 1980:124-9, with discussion at 36-7, 111-12, 116-17. A brief and rationalised version of the Haftvad tale is also found in al-Tabari's Arabic history of Persia, *Akhbār al-rusul wa-al-mulūk* i 817: 'Ruling in the coastlands along the Persian Gulf was

The means by which Ardeshir kills the Worm similarly bring us back to Alexander's dragon-slaying in the *Syriac Romance*, but the Ardeshir tale is primarily derivative of an account of the same events in the *Book of the Deeds of Ardeshir* (sometimes known as the *Ardeshir Romance*), which, in the form in which we have it, was probably composed fairly soon after 706 AD. It is so closely derivative, in fact, that there is no need to supply a dedicated summary of the *Deeds*' version of the episode, though we may note that the *Deeds* account, again in the form in which we have it, only picks up the story at the point where Ardeshir first clashes with Haftvad, and that, among its minor points of variation, Ardeshir pours brass as opposed to lead down the Worm's throat (both metals, of course, feature in the Syriac narrative). The version of the *Deeds* that we have declares itself to be a summary of a more expansive original and it is highly likely that this more expansive original included most of the substantive material that is to be found in the subsequent *Shahnameh*'s version, not least because the *Shahnameh*'s narrative makes sense of what is left obscure in the *Deeds* text. The relationship between the Worm and Haftvad's wealth and power is frustratingly unclear in the *Deeds*, as is the reason for his ability to defeat Ardeshir, but this becomes satisfyingly clear in the *Shahnameh* version that focuses so clearly on the Worm's luck-bringing qualities. The *Deeds* also leaves it unclear just how Ardeshir is able to pour molten metal down the Worm's throat when feeding it, and this too becomes lucidly clear in the *Shahnameh* version: the Worm lives at the bottom of a deep cistern and is fed on liquid food (whether blood or milk and honey), which is evidently poured down from the top directly into its upturned mouth. And this is why attention is drawn, in the *Deeds*, to the Worm calling for its food. The Worm knows when to hold its mouth up and open for the food because it is supplied in response to its call; indeed the raising of the mouth for the call and for the receipt of the food may be one and the same gesture.[24]

We may, however, assume that the *Deeds*' account of the episode is itself indeed derivative of the Syriac version of the *Romance*. But the influences of the *Romance* tradition upon the *Deeds* would seem to be wider than

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a king called 'b.t.n.d.w.d (Haftānbūkht?), who was accorded divine attributes and worship. Ardashir marched against him, killed him by cutting him in half with a sword, put to death members of his entourage, and brought forth from their subterranean store rooms extensive treasures that had been piled up there.' (Trans. Bosworth 1999:10.)

[24] *Deeds of Ardeshir* §§6-8 Ântiâ / §§7-9 Grenet. Grenet 2003 offers a French translation more reliable than the English translation of Ântiâ *et al.* 1900; both supply the Pahlavi text. For the text's date, see Grenet 2003:26. For its summary nature, see *Deeds* §1Ântiâ /Grenet, with discussion at Grenet 2003:26, 47.

the Syriac version (or the δ recension) alone, and would seem to include *Romance* material akin to that found in the α recension too. This is indicated by the *Deeds*' account of Ardeshir's rise to power in its first four or five chapters, which is seemingly derivative of or at any rate closely engages with the account of Alexander's taking of Persia in the α recension of the *Romance*. The *Deeds* tells how the initially humble Ardeshir bestows upon himself the power to conquer his predecessor Ardevan (also known variously as Artabanus IV and Artabanus V) by stealing his treasure and fleeing on horseback from his palace, together with Ardevan's royal majesty, his *farr*, sitting on his horse behind him in the form of a great golden ram, and reaching the sea. The α recension of the *Romance* describes how, at the instigation of the ram god Ammon, Alexander bestows upon himself the power to conquer Darius by infiltrating his banquet, stealing his golden cups, and then fleeing with them on horseback until he reaches the river Stranga. I have argued elsewhere that the α recension of the *Romance* as we have it (in the Greek A manuscript and the Armenian translation) partly reveals and partly obscures an original motif in which Alexander made his raid on Darius' golden cups in the guise of the ram god himself, that is to say, wearing the ram's fleece that was characteristic of him, with its head and horns sitting on his head, and that he tucked the golden cups into the fleece: this would then nicely have generated the appearance of a golden ram sitting behind Alexander as he rode away on his horse, and provided an excellent model for Ardeshir's *farr*-ram.[25]

This therefore opens up the possibility that the *Deeds*' account of the Worm of Haftvad tale (which, as we have seen, in its own fuller form is likely to have resembled the *Shahnameh*'s version) is subject to influence not just from the Syriac version (or the δ recension) but also from material akin to that found in the α recension too, i.e., from an account of the Agathos Daimon episode. Etiolated as this hypothesis may seem, its merit lies in the fact that Agathos Daimon's profile is a perfect match for the Worm of Haftvad. For, like the Worm (and also like his Greek counterpart Zeus Meilichios), Agathos Daimon specialised precisely in conferring luck and wealth upon his devotees and also, as is particularly clear in the α recension accounts, had a particular propensity for conferring his blessing on individual families in their own homes. His provinces are perhaps best summarised by the Neronian Stoic Cornutus: ‘Agathos Daimon... he divides and distributes due shares as a good distributor. He is a champion and preserver of household property, by virtue of preserving his own house in good condition and offering himself as an example to others. The horn of Amaltheia [sc. the cornucopia, the horn of plenty] is his special attribute, in which there grow at once all the things that grow in their individual seasons...’[26] The *Shahnameh* account of the Worm of Haftvad, as we have seen, lays particular emphasis on the Worm’s relationship with Haftvad’s family, and its maintenance in his home.[27] This, I think, is more plausible than Henning’s suggestion that the Haftvad tradition celebrates the triumph of the fire of Zoroastrianism over an Indian-style Naga cult, or Grenet’s suggestion that it constitutes an imaginative projection of the importance to medieval Persia of Chinese silk and the worms that produced it.[28]

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[25] *Deeds of Ardeshir* §§1-4 Ântiâ / §§1-5 Grenet; *Alexander Romance* (A) 2.13-15 and Armenian §§174-84 Wolohojian. Although the episode of the golden cups and the horseback flight to the river still feature in the Syriac version (2.6-7; translation at Budge 1889:72-5), all reference to Ammon and his fleece has dropped out of it. The case is laid out in full at Ogden 2011:72-6.

Why might the story-type of the killing of the dragon by feeding it materials that exploit its own fire to combust it from within have been so popular in medieval Persia? Possibly because it had a broad but welcome resonance for the inheritors of Zoroastrian mythology and tradition. The great dragon of the *Avesta* (ca. 1000-400 BC) is Aži Dahāka, the creation of Angra Mainya/Ahriman, the world’s Evil Principle, and he features in two battles. His first battle is against Atar, the embodiment of the fire so important to Zoroastrians, created by Spenta Mainyu/Ahura Mazda, the world’s Good Principle. The two spirits are in competition for kingly splendour (*farr*), and they fight for it using their proxy champions. Aži Dahāka first threatens to extinguish Atar, but Atar then threatens to send a stream of fire up through Aži Dahāka’s anus and out of his three mouths. Intimidated, Aži Dahāka withdraws.[29] The *Avesta* contains several similar references to Aži Dahāka’s second battle, that in which he is overcome by the hero Thraētaona, although the actual fight itself is never narrated. These references repeatedly tell us that Aži Dahāka has three mouths, three heads, six eyes and a thousand skills. Aži Dahāka offers sacrifices either to Ardvi Sura Anahita or to the Waters and to Vayu (‘Storm-Wind’), the Divider of the Waters, in hopes of emptying the earth of men, but the deities prefer Thraētaona’s sacrifices, as he prays rather to rid the world of Aži Dahāka and to liberate his two beautiful wives, Savanghavach and Erenavach, from him.[30]

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[26] Cornutus *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* pp.51-2 Lang.

[27] See discussions in the Agathos Daimon scholarship cited above. Texts that bear particularly on Agathos Daimon’s role as a bringer of luck and wealth to households, Cornutus and the *Alexander Romance* itself aside, include: Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F27 = Aelian *Nature of animals* 17.5 (on the private cults of Agathos Daimon snakes in Alexandria) and Plutarch *Moralia* 542e (on Timoleon’s dedication of his house at Syracuse to Agathos Daimon in celebration of his good luck).

[28] Henning 1968, Grenet 2003:33-4. For Indian Naga cults, see, again, Vogel 1926 and Cozad 2004.

[29] *Avesta, Yašts* 19.46-50. For the *Avesta* (*Yasna, Yašts*, and *Vidēvdat/Vendidād*) see Geldner 1886-96; for translations see Darmesteter and Mills 1880-87 (obsolete). Discussion of Aži Dahāka at Boyce 1975:97-100, Puhvel 1987:110-11, Watkins 1995:313-20, 464-8, West 2007:259-60, 266-7.

Aži Dahāka does in fact appear in the *Shahnameh* in his own right, albeit in a somewhat evolved form: he has become the evil Arabian king Zahhak (a.k.a. Zohak) who appears in the early part of the work, whilst his nemesis Thraētaona has become Feraydun (a.k.a. Fredun). According to the *Shahnameh*, Eblis, the Devil, appears before Zahhak and persuades him to murder his father Merdas and assume his crown, whereupon he becomes an evil tyrant. When Eblis subsequently kisses him on each shoulder, a snake-head grows from each. Although he amputates them, they grow back again. In the meantime, it seems, his own head in the middle becomes snakelike too, and indeed he is sometimes referred to now simply as a serpent. (Hence he comes to possess the three snake-heads of Aži Dahāka.) Each night he seizes two young men and feeds their brains to his shoulder-snakes in an attempt to cure the condition, but to no avail. He invades Persia and ousts king Jamshid, seizing his two beautiful sisters Shahrnavaz and Arnavaz to be his wives, turning them into sorceresses. He dreams that he is destined to be overcome by the nobleman Feraydun with an ox-headed mace. His attempts to kill Feraydun pre-emptively in childhood come to nought when Feraydun is given by his mother to a cowherd to rear (we are reminded of Herodotus’ account of baby Cyrus here). In the course of his campaign against Zahhak, Feraydun captures the palace from which the king has fled, and liberates his harem, including the two fair sisters of Jamshid. (This reflects Thraētaona’s liberation of Aži Dahāka’s two beautiful wives, but is also perhaps reminiscent of the *Alexander Romance*’s accounts of Alexander’s capture of Darius’ harem tent.) And in due course Feraydun does indeed strike Zahhak and bring him low with his ox-headed mace, whereupon he trusses him up and deposits him in a cave beneath Mt Damavand. (There are intimations here of Zeus’ binding of the dragon Typhon beneath Etna and other mountains.)

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[30] *Avesta, Yašts* 5.28-35, 9.13-15, 114.40, 15.18-25, *Yasna* 9.7-8 and *Vidēvdat/Vendidād* 1.17 (the latter two texts with confirmation that Thraētaona did indeed prevail in the battle).

Admittedly, none of this ultimately prevents Aži Dahāka having been an inspiration for Sekandar's dragon too, albeit by a different route.[31]

Actually the motif of the deployment of fire against a dragon is quite widespread in the Indo-European mythologies. We may point, in the Greek tradition, to Zeus' fight against the multi-headed fiery dragon Typhon, whom he destroys with his thunderbolts.[32] And we may point to the use of fire against dragons also in the Indian tradition. On the Hindu side, the Sanskrit *Adi Parvan* (*Beginning Section*) of the *Mahabharata* (ca. 300 BC – 300 AD) tells of King Janamejaya's revenge against the Nagaraja (supernatural cobra-king) Takshaka by charming all the snakes of the world onto a pyre, including some a mile long and others the size of elephants in a great *Sarpasattra* or 'Serpent-sacrifice.'[33] On the Buddhist side, the Pali *Mahavagga* (first-century AD) tells the story of Buddha's battle with Canda, the Nagaraja of Uruvela, in which the Buddha counters the stream of fire Canda directs against him by sending forth in turn 'a fiery purification of his own bodily substances.'[34]

But let us return to the specific story-type at hand, with a cautionary note. We must not forget that we are dealing with a few points of light here in an ocean of darkness, and to attempt to assemble the Bellerophon, Daniel, Ardeshir and Sekandar tales into some sort of sequence may be something of a drunkard's search. The motif of the killing of the dragon by feeding it burning or combustible material may well be best considered a folktale motif, with all that that implies for the breadth and depth of its spread, and for the impossibility of genealogising it, for all that it is not included in Stith Thompson's index of folktale motifs.[35] We may point, for example, to some

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[31] *Shahnameh* V.35-62; translation at Davis 2006:9-27 and Warner and Warner 1912:i, 145-70. For Zahhak see also *Dēnkard* 7.1.26 and *Bundahish* 29.8-9. Herodotus on Cyrus: 1.107-22. The capture of the palace in the king's absence, and of his harem, are strikingly reminiscent of the Alexander tradition, though less so of the *Alexander Romance* itself. For Alexander's capture of Darius' harem tent, see Arrian *Anabasis* 2.11-12, Plutarch *Alexander* 21, Diodorus 17.37-8, Curtius 3.11-12; cf. *Alexander Romance* 1.41. For his capture of Persepolis, see Arrian *Anabasis* 3.16-18, Plutarch *Alexander* 35-8, Diodorus 17.64-72, Curtius 5.1-7, Justin 11.14. Was the historical Alexander making appeal to the imagery of Thraētaona's liberation of the two fair wives of Aži Dahāka in marrying a pair of Persian royal women on the same day at Susa: Arrian *Anabasis* 7.4?

[32] Hesiod *Theogony* 306-7, 820-80, etc. As Feraydun trusses Zahhak up and deposits him in a cave beneath Mt Damavand, so Zeus binds Typhon beneath Etna and other mountains.

[33] *Adi Parvan* of the *Mahabharata* §§49-58. Discussion at Vogel 1926: 66-71, Cozad 2004:49-80.

[34] *Mahavagga* 1.15.1-5. Discussion at Vogel 1926:107-10, Cozad 2004:86-8.

[35] See Thompson 1966 B11; the closest we appear to come is A2468.3 ('Why dragon dies by means of fire') and B11.21.1 (Dragon cannot be killed with weapons').

British dragon-slaying folktales. Thus Hector Gunn dispatched the Worm of Cnoc-na-Cnoimh (Worm's Hill) in Glen Cassley in Sutherland by taking a seven-ell spear, putting a a great divot of peat on the end of it, dipping the whole in boiling pitch, and thrusting it into the foul-breathed serpent's mouth as it gasped from the peat's own pungency.[36] Baron Linton dispatched the Worm of Wormistone similarly by tying to a wheel on the end of his lance a bolus of peat steeped in a boiling mixture of resin, brimstone and pitch.[37] From Orkney comes the tale of Assipattle and the Stoor Worm. Assipattle dispatched this sea-serpent by sailing into its mouth in a boat and down its gullet as through a tunnel. He put ashore at its liver, dug a hole into it and inserted into the hole a bucket-load of burning peat. He was disgorged by the serpent as it wretched in agony. The teeth dislodged as it banged its head upon the earth became the islands of Orkney, Shetland and Faroe.[38]

However, we can expect the tellers of all these tales to have had access to the Bel and the Dragon story, which was incorporated into the Book of Daniel in the Latin Vulgate (as chapter 14 of the Book of Daniel), and indeed included in the original edition of the King James Bible, and so there may, after all, be a reconstructable genealogy here, should we want it. Greater pause for thought is given by a famous Polish folktale, however. The Wawel-hill cave of the dragon – 'Smok Wawelski' – killed by the legendary king Krakus (he of the cucumbers) is still shown to tourists in the heart of Kraków. The tale is first attested in the Latin chronicle of Wincenty Kadłubek, composed 1190-1208 AD. This tells how the locals are terrorised by the dragon, and have to supply it with a fixed number of oxen each week, or else it will seize the same number of human victims for itself. Eventually king Krakus persuades his two sons that it is their duty, as heirs to the throne, to defeat the menace, which they duly do. Instead of laying out oxen for it, they lay out ox-hides stuffed with sulphur. The dragon swallows these down whole as is its wont (and as, we may note, is the wont of all snakes), and living up to its name as a *holophagus*, a 'whole-swallower'. Once in the stomach the sulphur catches light and chokes the dragon from within. However, the younger son, wishing to take sole rule of the kingdom for himself, kills the elder and tells his father that he has been killed by the dragon. Later, the truth comes out; the remaining brother is sent into exile and the succession bestowed upon the elder brother's sole infant daughter, Wanda.[39] Again we may well imagine that Kadłubek was familiar with and had easy access to Bel and the Dragon, but the distinctive motif of the stuffed animal hides, so familiar to us now after the Alexander narratives of the Syriac *Romance* and the *Shahnameh* does not, as we have seen, feature in the Bel narrative. Wherever Kadłubek or his own sources found the motif, we can be sure it was not in a Syriac or Persian text.

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[36] Text at Robertson 1961: 131-2; discussion at Simpson 1980:78-9.

[37] Text at Henderson 1879:256-8; discussion at Simpson 1980:56, 78.

[38] Text at Martwick 1974:139-44 and Simpson 1980: 137-41, with discussion at 78-9.

Abbreviations

ATU: Uther 2004
FGrH: Jacoby *et al.* 1923.
TrGF: Snell *et al.* 1971-2004.

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[39] Wincenty Kadłubek *Chronica seu originale regum et principum Poloniae* (1190-1208 AD) at *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* (Bielowski 1864-93) ii, pp.256-7.

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Stories of the Persian Bride: Alexander and Roxane

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Introduction

In spring 327 BC, at an advanced age for an Argead ruler,[1] Alexander the Great married for the first time. Probably contrary to general expectations, he neither courted a Macedonian noble woman nor one of the captured Achaemenid princesses but a 'no-name', Roxane, the daughter of the Bactrian noble Oxyartes.[2] Obviously, the wedding was no matter of the bride's dynastic prestige but motivated by urgent political pressure: At this point of time, the fairly successful revolt of Bactria and Sogdiana seriously menaced Alexander's conquests.[3] As military repression had failed, he tried to come to terms with the resistant local nobility by conciliatory policy. In fact, marrying into the family of one of the influential rebels proved to be a breakthrough step: Alexander's father-in-law surrendered to him and was involved diplomatically in ending the revolt.[4]

In 324 at Susa, Alexander took as additional wives Stateira, the youngest daughter of Darius III, and Parysatis, daughter of Artaxerxes III.[5] The marriages served to legitimize his usurpation symbolizing the continuity of

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[1] Cf. Greenwalt 1988, 93-95.

[2] Bactria was known for its military strength: Arr. *An*. 3,21,5.

[3] Cf. Olbrycht 2010, 359-360; 2004, 29-31; Briant 2010, 54-58, 116; Wiesehöfer 2005, 151; Müller 2003, 61-62; Carney 2000, 99; Heckel 2009, 242; Ogden 2009, 207; 1999, 44; Yardley/Heckel 1997, 291; Hammond 1997, 154; Wirth 1993a, 108-109; Holt 1988, 66-68; Hamilton 1969, 130.

[4] Arr. *An*. 4,21,6-10; Curt. 9,8,10. Thus, Roxane was 'as much a bribe as a bride': Holt 1988, 68. Cf. Briant 2010, 114.

[5] Arr. *An*. 7,4,4-8; Diod. 17,107,6; Just. 12,10,9; Curt. 10,3,12; Plut. *Alex*. 70,3; Athen. 12,538 B-539 A.

Achaemenid rule.[6] In addition, the Macedonians were reminded that by now they finally had to accept Alexander's new regal style and give up any traditional idea of the Macedonian empire.

As Roxane could not measure up to the dynastic prestige of the Achaemenid princesses, their new role at Alexander's court doubtlessly diminished her status.[7] Even more, she had not been able to stabilize her position by begetting an heir during his lifetime.[8] However, in the after-life, the Achaemenid princesses vanished from the scene and despite her comparatively modest status, Roxane rose to a certain prominence. Being the mother of Alexander's only legitimate posthumously born son, she became the most famous of the king's brides whose relationship was romanticized in various legends.

This study examines the influence of the Greek Alexander Romance on Roxane's image within Eastern and Western medieval Alexander literature. It will be shown that her portrait changed as she was brought out from obscurity adorned with an Achaemenid descent. However, even in legend her prominence was mostly limited.

Alexander and Roxane

In the first years of his reign, Alexander did not marry, presumably because he feared the dangers of dynastic trouble and factional strife carried by a royal marriage.[9] The sources are in conflict on the circumstances of his first wedding but agree that it was love at first sight. Smitten by Roxane's beauty, Alexander decided to marry her when he saw her on the occasion of a banquet after Oxyartes' surrender.[10] However, the reports are obscured by either romanticized or hostile traditions. In fact, Alexander's proposal to Roxane was a less-than-ideal emergency solution that precipitated her father's submission.[11] In the official report, the embarrassing fact that the Macedonian hero was forced to marry a foreign enemy's offspring because he was not able to defeat him and his allies did not suit Alexander's image as invincible warrior king and had to be covered up.

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[6] Cf. Ormitay 2010, 86; Olbrycht 2010, 362; Carney 2003, 246-247; 2000, 100-113; Ogden 1999, 44-45; Brosius 1996, 77.

[7] Cf. Briant 2010, 128; Heckel 2009, 242.

[8] Only the Metz Epitome mention a son who was either still-born or died soon on the Hydaspes in 326 (ME 70). Although the report is mainly accepted (cf. Atkinson/Yardley 2009, 137; Heckel 2009, 242; Rathmann 2005, 23, n. 59; Bosworth 2002, 30; Carney 2000, 107; Yardley/Heckel 1997, 291), it is difficult to believe as no other source attests Roxane's presence there. Probably, the story served to stress the intimacy of their relationship in the interests of the claims of Alexander IV.

[9] Cf. Baynham 1998a, 192; 1998b, 148-151; Müller 2003, 60-61; Carney 2000, 99.

[10] Curt. 8,4,23-30; 10,3,11; Arr. *An*. 4,19,5; 6,15,3; ME 29; Strab. 11,11,4; Plut. *Mor*. 332 E; *Alex*. 47. Diodorus' report is lost. The content list to his book 17 mentions the marriage and that many other Macedonians were persuaded to take Iranian wives concur-

Probably, Ptolemy and Aristobulus who tended to polish Alexander's memory adopted the official version.[12] It is worth noting that they obviously failed to suggest any political motives on Alexander's part but dealt with the moral theme depicting him as the self-restraint philosopher king instead: Although he could well have violated Roxane, he did not abuse his victor's right.[13] This being so, the official version presumably justified the unpopular marriage by stressing Alexander's *sophrosyne* as a sign of the ideal ruler. Evidently, the Bactrian's and Sogdian's public opinion was also taken in account as he could not afford to fuel the fire again.[14] While the romanticizing may well have formed part of Alexander's official propaganda, the moral theory will have dominated. Since royal weddings were a matter of dynasty, succession, and empire, love alone was no good excuse.[15]

Presumably, the official version was influenced by Callisthenes' earlier treatment of the moral theme dealing with Alexander's honourable treatment of the captured Achaemenid women at Issus.[16] According to this ultimate example of the young ruler's self-control, he never set eyes on Darius' charming wife Stateira.[17] The episode is patterned upon Xenophon's report

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rently (cf. ME 31) Cf. Olbrycht 2010, 360. However, this might be a case of historical muddle (Susa 324).

[11] Cf. Bosworth 1995, 131: Roxane actually may have been in Alexander's entourage for several months until he married her. Perhaps Curtius records the ceremony in its due time. Cf. Heckel 2009, 242.

[12] Although Ptolemy might himself have regarded the marriage as embarrassing (Curt. 10,6,13-14). Cf. Heckel 2009, 238; Bosworth 2002, 38-39.

[13] Arr. *An*. 4,19,5-6; Curt. 8,4,25; Plut. *Alex*. 47,7; ME 29.

[14] For the marriage's unpopularity with them see Carney 2003, 245-246; Bosworth 1995, 131; Wirth 1993a, 165, n. 470. Perhaps it was even conducted in Macedonian style (Curt. 8,4,27). Cf. Briant 2010, 116-117; Bosworth 1995, 131.

[15] Cf. Carney 2000, 98. For instance, Satyrus contrasts fatally marrying *erastheis* (being in love) and wisely marrying *kata polemon* (in accordance with war): Athen. 13,557 C-E. Cf. Ogden 2009, 207-208; Müller 2009, 36-37.

[16] Cf. Baynham 1998, 60; Bosworth 1980, 220.

[17] Arr. *An*. 2,12,5; Plut. *Alex*. 21,1-2; 22,2; *Mor*. 522 A. Cf. Carney 2000, 94-96. His visit to their tent (Curt. 3,12,15-26; Diod. 17,37,5-38,2; 114,2; Arr. *An*. 2,12,5-8; Val. Max. 4,7ext. 2a) was a later invention, probably by Cleitarchus. Cf. Baynham 1998, 80; Bosworth 1980, 222.

in the *Cyropaedia* that his hero, Cyrus II, refused to set eyes on Panthea who was reported to be the most beautiful Asian woman in his time.[18] She was the captured wife of Abradates, the ruler of Susa.[19] Moreover, the story about Alexander's restraint towards Stateira is closely associated with the marriage of Roxane: 'As for Darius' wife, who was said to be the most beautiful woman in Asia, (…) young as he was and at the very height of good fortune, when men act violently: he respected and spared her, showing much restraint as well as an ambition for good repute'.[20] Since the connection of the two incidents became a familiar rhetorical theme,[21] this association might have been the root of the Greek Alexander Romance's claim that Roxane was Darius' daughter.

As a variation, Cleitarchus seems to have characterized the marriage as a blend of love match, moral example and political step. Following him, Plutarch chose to focus on his self-restraint: 'most temperate of all men that he was in these matters, he would not consent to approach even the only woman who ever mastered his affections, without the sanction of *nomos*.'[22] Curtius' version, probably also deriving from Cleitarchus, presents the marriage in a different light adducing it as one more example of Alexander's depravation.[23] Again, Roxane plays no autonomous role but serves as a medium through which Alexander's moral standards could be fixed. Thus, his *cupiditas* for a captive girl shows that he 'by now had less mastery over his passions amid the constant indulgence of Fortune'.[24]

Curtius makes it plain that it is not higher love he speaks about. However, Alexander hesitated to violate Roxane and made Oxyartes' day by asking him for her hand. Turning the traditional high praise of his *sophrosyne* into an example of his hypocrisy and immoderation, Curtius characterizes his political motivation as a mere pretext: 'And so he, who had looked upon the wife of Darius and his two maiden daughters (…) with no other feeling than that of a father, was then so transported with love for this little maiden, of obscure birth in comparison with royal stock, that he said it was important for establishing his empire that Persians and Macedonians be joined in wedlock'.[25] Elizabeth Baynham stresses the ironic element of haste about the marriage.[26] Curtius mocks at the former philosopher king who lost both his senses and morals, hence marrying a dancing girl right on the spot. Alexander's attempt to compare Roxane with Briseis, a common motif in Roman rhetoric, might also have been irony on Curtius' part: Alexander's mythical ancestor did not scandalize his men by marrying his war captive.[27]

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[18] Xen. *Cyr.* 4,6,11; 5,1,7-8; 6,1,41.

[19] Xen. *Cyr.* 5,1,2-3.

[20] Arr. *An.* 4,19,6. Transl. P.A. Brunt.

[21] Cf. Bosworth 1995, 132.

[22] Plut. *Alex.* 47,4. Transl. B. Perrin. Cf. Hamilton 1969, 129-130.

[23] Curt. 8,4,30. Cf. Stoneman 2003, 339; Baynham 1998, 166, 190.

[24] Curt. 8,4,24. Transl. J.C. Rolfe.

[25] Curt. 8,4,25. Cf. Baynham 1998, 191.

After the wedding, Roxane vanished from the scene to reappear only in the last days of Alexander's life.[28] Obviously, he failed in incorporating her into his political self-fashioning.[29] As a guarantee of Oxyartes' loyalty, she lost her symbolic aura as soon as the revolt in Bactria and Sogdiana came to an end. In the light of the Macedonian resentment, Alexander will have had even less interest in giving her a public profile. In addition, thanks to his self-centred heroic *persona* he needed no wife or children at his side. Instead, he exercised paternalism in the sense of obligation to his soldiers and population.[30]

However, according to Lucian, the Greek artist Aëtion painted a picture of *The Marriage of Roxane and Alexander*.[31] The date of the lost painting is debated.[32] It might have been commissioned after 323 in the interests of the claims of Alexander IV. Conspicuously, the satiric Lucian is the only one attesting its existence.[33] In his ironic essay *Herodotus sive Aëtion,* he ridicules the thirst for glory of historiographers and philosophers reporting that his literary Self wanted to impress a Macedonian audience by the painting's description that, in fact, turns out to be a 'witty parody'[34] on the conqueror's preference for his best man: A cupid is forced to drag Alexander 'with all his might' to a shy Roxane, away from Hephaestion.[35] It is rather doubtful that a Macedonian audience will have been amused. Given Lucian's satirical tone, it might be possible that the painting was but a parody on Aëtion's actual picture of *The Wedding of Semiramis* (*and Ninus*).[36]

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[26] Cf. Baynham 1998, 192.

[27] Curt. 8,4,26. Probably, it did not form part of Alexander's genuine propaganda. His alleged *imitatio Achillei* does not seem to have been contemporary. Cf. Heckel 2011.

[28] Arr. *An*. 7,27,3.

[29] Cf. Briant 2010, 114; Müller 2008, 278-279; Carney 2003, 245; 2000, 107.

[30] Cf. Hölscher 2009, 30-32.

[31] Luc. *Hdt. siv. Aet*. 5-6; *Im*. 7 (only the red colour of Roxane's lips are mentioned). Cf. Atkinson/Yardley 2009, 136; Stewart 2003, 41. It is debated whether a Pompeian fresco could be a copy. In any case, there is no certainty.

[32] Cf. Polanski 2002, 227-238.

[33] This is a central element of Lucian's derision. Cf. *Hist. Conscr*. 8-10; 42; *Icar*. 4-8; 29-32; *Pseudol*. 2-3; *Philops*. 6-39; *VH* 1,2-4.

[34] Stewart 2003, 41.

[35] Luc. *Hdt. siv. Aet*. 5.

Roxane is mentioned again in the generals' debate over Alexander's succession in July 323 when she was either six or eight months pregnant.[37] Parts of the Macedonians protested against the prospect of a 'half-barbarian' heir to the Argead throne.[38] Obviously, Alexander had failed in asserting that the ideology of panhellenism was a matter of the past.[39] However, since Perdiccas, the regent, acting as 'Alexander's champion'[40] committed to Roxane, the compromise was reached that after his birth her son, Alexander IV, became *symbasileus* with Arrhidaeus, his mentally retarded uncle.[41] Supported by Perdiccas, Roxane murdered Alexander's wife Stateira to secure her unborn child's interests.[42] Elizabeth Carney plausibly suggests that her second victim was not her sister Drypetis, Hephaestion's widow, as Plutarch reports, but in fact Parysatis since Alexander's Achaemenid wives could have made trouble for Roxane and her supporters by claiming to be pregnant.[43]

Despite being Alexander's only widow left, Roxane was still treated as an outsider who did not matter much.[44] In addition, since her son's coregency was only nominally, her role as the king's mother was clearly limited. She fell into the hands of different generals ending up as an ambiguous symbol of Alexander's unpopular Persian policy. After having accompanied Perdiccas to Egypt, she and her son were taken to Macedonia by Antipater, stayed then briefly in the camp of Antigonus and finally took refuge with Olympias at Pydna.[45] Maybe Roxane's dedications to Athena Polias attested by a fragmentary Athenian inventory were made at this time.[46] Having defeated Olympias' faction, Cassander kept Roxane and her son imprisoned at Amphipolis.[47] In 310, he solved the growing problem of the boy coming to age by having him and his mother removed, thereby pleasing also his rivals.[48]

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[36] Plin. *NH* 35,78. Cf. Bröker/Müller 2004, 5. This would be comparable to Lucian's ironic comment on Arrian's alleged biography of the robber Tilliborus who terrorized Asia Minor (*Alex*. 2), thereby supposedly making fun of the *Anabasis*. Cf. PIR² T 210; Wirth 1964, 233.

[37] Curt. 10,6,9; Just. 13,2,5. Cf. Yardley/Heckel 1997, 292.

[38] Just. 13,2,5-6; Curt. 10,6,9; 13-14. Cf. Heckel 2009, 238, 242; Atkinson/Yardley 2009, 136, 182; Bosworth 2002 30; 1995, 132.

[39] Cf. Müller 2011, 129-130.

[40] Braund 2005, 22. Cf. Bosworth 2002, 9, 38; Carney 2000, 146.

[41] Arr. *Succ*. 1,1. 8; OGIS I 4. Cf. Briant 2010, 143; Atkinson/Yardley 2009, 180;

[42] Plut. *Alex*. 77,6. Cf. Rathmann 2005, 32, 43; Atkinson/Yardley 2009, 180-181.

[43] Cf. Carney 2000, 110-111. See also Heckel 2009, 199.

[44] Cf. Braund 2005, 27.

[45] Paus. 1,6,3; Arr. *Succ*. 1,38. 42-44; Diod. 18,39,7; 19,35,5; Just. 14,6,2. Cf. Heckel 2009, 242, 338, n. 659; Braund 2005, 24-25.

[46] IG II² 1492 a 45-57. She offered a rhyton, necklace and wine jar, all made of gold. Cf. Atkinson/Yardley 2009, 181; Heckel 2009, 338, n. 660; Kosmetatou 2004, 75-80; Berve 1926, 347, n. 2.

It is revealing that despite the importance of the Argead legacy in the time of the Successors,[49] Alexander's widow Roxane never got the chance to marry again. She seemed to have carried the stigma of being unacceptable because of her Bactrian origin and unpopularity with the Macedonians. As the Successors had experienced the objections to Alexander's marriage policy at first hand, they seemed to have cautiously avoided his mistakes. The obscure tradition of Alexander instructing Perdiccas on his deathbed to marry Roxane is propagandistic fiction built up around Perdiccas' claim to take care of the whole empire on behalf of Alexander's son.[50] In reality, he showed no interest in marrying Roxane but courted Antipater's daughter Nicaea and Alexander's sister Cleopatra.[51]

To conclude, Roxane played no real public role in Alexander's reign. After his death, she was partly brought out from obscurity in the interest of her son's claims but her visibility was short-lived and limited. Marginalized by some Macedonian factions, she remained a colourless figure whom the sources use mainly as a tool to praise or criticize Alexander without attributing further importance to her.

Roxane in the Greek Alexander Romance

In the Greek Alexander Romance, Roxane is identified as daughter of Darius III. In consequence, she is already mentioned in Darius' death scene when he was comforted by Alexander and legitimated his succession by asking him to marry her: 'When I am dead, Alexander, bury me with your own hands … Let the families of Darius and Alexander be one … As for my daughter

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[47] Diod. 19,52,4; 161,1; Just. 14,6,13. Cf. Heckel 2009, 79; Bosworth 2002, 41.

[48] Diod. 19,105,1-2; Just. 15,2,2-5; Paus. 9,7,2; Trog. Prol 15. Cf. Heckel 2009, 81; Braund 2005, 27; Wirth 1993a, 203, n. 117.

[49] Cf. Braund 2005, 22.

[50] ME 112, 118. Cf. Rathmann 2005, 68-70; Merkelbach 1954, 54-55, 132, 164-192. Perdiccas' striking importance within the text indicates that it derived from a contemporary pamphlet favourable to him.

[51] Arr. *Succ.* 1,21. 26; Diod. 18,23,1-3; Just. 13,6,4-6; Plut. *Eum.* 3,9. Cf. Heckel 2009, 199-201.

Roxane, I give her to you for a wife, to start a line of descendants that will preserve your memory'.[52]

After Darius' burial and execution of his assassins, Alexander wrote a letter to Darius' family announcing his marriage plan. Darius' mother and wife replied that they wished him well as now he was their new Darius. Before he continued his adventure trip, Alexander asked his mother to send Roxane the royal jewellery as a gift. Vanishing from the scene, Roxane reappeared not before Alexander's final days. After his last disastrous symposium, she accompanied him to the palace tending him on the deathbed.[53] These final harmonious scenes that also formed part of the *Metz Epitome* are probably exaggerations in the interests of the claims of Alexander IV.[54]

In any case, in the Romance, Roxane's prestige has grown remarkably. It is uncertain whether the invention of her royal origin was simply a case of historical muddle.[55] For instance, she might have been mistaken for Alexander's wife Stateira or her namesake, Darius' wife, whose honourable treatment by Alexander was closely connected with his marriage to Roxane. On the other hand, it is suggested that the story derived from an Eastern source as it suited the Persian writers:[56] In fact, in the Romance, Achaemenid rule was not ended by the Macedonian invasion. Richard Stoneman argues plausibly that from a dramatic point of view, there is real fitness in Alexander's marrying Darius' daughter.[57] It is evident that this first climax of the story is thus completed harmonically: Alexander has conquered the empire and been recognized by his dying opponent as his true successor. Hence, the union of the two royal houses, personified by a future son, occurs in the right time at the right place. Neither Roxane's Bactrian origin nor Alexander's weddings at Susa would have suited the story-line well. Therefore, the Romance's wedding was a clever combination of both incidents transferring Alexander's union with the Achaemenid dynasty into the aftermath of the victorious battle of Gaugamela for literary effect. In addition, his reconciliation with Darius was sealed by the marriage, thereby completing the happy ending.

However, it is of interest that despite Roxane's considerable greater prestige in the Romance, little attention is paid to her by the author in general. This is even more striking as the Greek Romances in general revolve around love themes containing an erotic element.[58] Richard Stoneman calls Alexander's chaste love life in the Alexander Romance 'a string of missed opportunities'.[59] Since he appeared first and foremost as a son, love interest was replaced by the focus on his relations with his mother and mother-figures like Queen Candace of Meroe.[60]

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[52] Ps-Cal. 2,20,7-9. Transl. R. Stoneman. Darius was stabbed by traitors.

[53] Ps-Call. 2,21,1-22,10; 3,32,1. Cf. Arr. *An*. 7,27,3.

[54] ME 101-102, 110, 112. Cf. Heckel 2009, 242.

[55] Cf. Stoneman 2008, 29; Merkelbach 1954, 22, n. 9.

[56] Cf. Stoneman 2008, 28.

[57] Cf. Stoneman 2008, 29. See also Ehlert 1989, 97-99.

Alexander's depiction as notably chaste might reflect features of his genuine propaganda. In addition, the Romance's narrative might be coloured by philosophical ideas of the moderation and continence of a true king.[61] Moreover, it is to be taken into consideration that the text was composed in Alexandria and contained traces of earlier traditions influenced by Ptolemaic propaganda.[62] This being so, it might have increased Roxane's colourlessness. Curtius mentions that Ptolemy was one of the first to reject the legitimacy of her son.[63] In fact, despite the importance of Alexander's memory in the reigns of the Ptolemies, they had little interest in remembering his marriages. Ever since Egypt had been conquered by Cambyses II in 525 BC, the Persians were not popular with the Egyptians.[64] Ptolemaic propaganda even turned the traditional enemy image as a political weapon against the Seleucids reputed to be the legitimate successors of the Achaemenids.[65] Therefore, in public, the Ptolemies kept their distance from the legacy of the Persian Empire.[66]

To sum up, in the Greek Alexander Romance, especially in comparison to the mother-figures, Roxane remains shadowy.

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[58] Cf. Stoneman 2003, 332-333; 2008, 128.

[59] Stoneman 2008, 129. Cf. Stoneman 2003, 332-333.

[60] Cf. Ogden 2009, 210; Stoneman 2003, 333; Ehlert 1989, 81-84. As a variation, in some medieval legends, Candace and Alexander have a passionate affair (cf. Ulrich von Etzenbach, 20481-20486). Cf. Cary 1956, 99-100.

[61] Cf. Stoneman 2003, 342.

[62] Cf. Koulakiotis 2006, 92-93; Jouanno 2002, 61-67; Wirth 1993b, 39-44; Merkelbach 1954, 25, 59.

[63] Curt. 10,6,13-14. Cf. Heckel 2009, 238.

[64] Hdt. 3,1-30; Curt. 4,7,1-2.

[65] Cf. Hölbl 1994, 73-74.

[66] Cf. Müller 2009, 305-316. Likely, Ptolemy repudiated Artacama, his Persian wife, soon after Alexander's death: Arr. *An.* 7,4,6; Plut. *Eum.* 1,7. Cf. Heckel 2009, 55-56; Müller 2009, 22; Braund 2005, 24; Brosius 1996, 78.

Roxane in the Medieval Alexander Romances

Iskandar (Alexander) became a major figure of Persian literature, starting with Firdausi's *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings) that transmitted his story to central Asia and beyond.[67] Despite the Greek Alexander Romance's influence on the Eastern Alexander Romances,[68] however, regarding his love life, Alexander bears little resemblance to the chaste king of the Greek version. He is mainly depicted as a young and handsome polygamous womanizer who is not likely to miss a chance.[69]

In Firdausi's *Shanameh*, Nizami's *Iskandarnameh* and Jami's *Khiradnamah-yi Iskandari* (*Logic of Alexander*), the depiction of Roxane is related to the scenes within the Greek Romance.[70] She is identified as daughter of the Persian king, Dara, Alexander's enemy, who was stabbed by traitors and died in his arms entrusting his kingdom, family, and especially his daughter to him in order to continue his line. According to Firdausi, Dara told Alexander (who actually was his half-brother): 'See to my children and my loved ones whose faces are veiled. Marry my pure-bodied daughter and maintain her security in your palace. Her mother named her Rowshanak and with her provided the world with joy and adornment. It may be that by her you will have a noble son who will restore the name of Esfandiyar to glory'.[71] In Jami's version, an imitation of Nizami, Alexander replied to Dara's request: 'If I marry Roxana, I will love her so much that I will be ruled by her. Then people will say that Alexander won the world from Dara only to surrender it to Dara's daughter'.[72]

Firdausi's Alexander cared for Darius' burial and execution of his assassins, corresponded with the royal family, married Roxane and fell in love with her. Despite, he had an additional wife, the daughter of the Indian king Kayd, and so many love affairs that he even had to be cured from physical exhaustion. On his deathbed, Alexander indicated that Roxane's unborn son should be his heir.[73]

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[67] Cf. Asirvatham 2010, 117-121; Stoneman 2008, 29, 33; Gaillard 2005, 9.

[68] Cf. Venetis 2008, 59-62.

[69] Cf. Müller 2008, 280-283; Southgate 1977, 278, 281.

[70] The *Shanameh* was composed between the tenth and early eleventh century, the *Iskandarnameh* before 1197, and Jami's version in the fifteenth century. Cf. Stoneman 2008, 38, 233-234.

[71] Stoneman 2008, 28. Cf. Southgate 1978, 170.

[72] Southgate 1978, 180.

[73] Cf. Southgate 1978, 170-171, 173; 1977, 281-282. See also Yamanaka 1999.

Drawing on the *Shahnameh*, Nizami's depiction of Roxane is similar. Alexander prepared a splendorous marriage conducted in Macedonian and Persian style meant to consolidate his rule. Obviously sharing his pragmatic view, Roxane's mother urged her daughter to save their dynasty by making Alexander happy: Otherwise, her gold earrings would be worthless. As they could not fight Alexander, they had to cooperate. In fact, Roxane managed to capture his love. But although he was fond of her, he wanted to continue his expedition and sent her to Rūm where she bore him a son called Iskandarus.[74] Roxane does not appear again in the *Iskandarnameh*. As she was out of sight, out of mind, Alexander forgot about his promise to be true to her, married an Indian princess, felt deeply for Nushaba, the beautiful queen of Barda (replacing Candace), and had a passionate love affair with a Chinese slave girl. Portrayed as a strong-willed, brave person, she even supported him as his comrade-in-arms in his seven battles against the Russians.[75]

It is of interest that, obviously influenced by the Greek Alexander Romance, Firdausi's and Nizami's Roxane is again a rather bloodless figure. This is even more remarkable as the subject of Alexander's relationship with women plays a central role.[76] In contrast, in Tarsusi's twelfth-century prose *Darabnamah*,[77] dealing with fabulous accounts, exceptionally much attention is paid to the daughter of king Darab, Burandukht, Alexander's half-niece, who was a powerful and brave warrior queen educated like a prince.[78] At first, she refused to marry Alexander because he had caused her father's death.[79] After some battles and a change of mind, she became his wife and was appointed by him to rule in his absence. Later on, she came to his aid when he got into trouble in India, experienced her own adventures and saved his life again in the land of the cannibal Zangis.[80]

In the anonymous twelfth to fourteenth century *Iskandarnameh* again, Roxane is the name of Darius' wife while his daughter is called Estatira.

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[74] Nizami 1991, I 263.

[75] Nizami 1991, I 361-364 (Indian princess); I 297-308 (Nushaba); I 413-498 (Chinese slave girl).

[76] Cf. Venetis 2008, 61-62; Southgate 1977, 282.

[77] Cf. Stoneman 2008, 32; Southgate 1978, 181.

[78] Cf. Gaillard 2005, 23-25, 30-32, 53-37, 42-46; Southgate 1978, 182.

[79] Tarsusi 2005, 152-154. In Western Alexander legends, according to a popular tradition, Roxane tried to revenge her father's death by drowning him in his diving bell. Cf. Noll 2005, 22; Ehlert 1989, 98; Cary 1956, 237-238.

[80] Tarsusi 2005, 156-166; 185-240. Cf. Southgate 1978, 182.

Further, there is no mention of Alexander's marriage to Darius' daughter at her father's request.[81]

As the Christianized Alexander of the Western Romances practised monogamy, one might expect that Western legends brought Roxane out from obscurity. However, this is mainly not the case. For instance, in Walter de Châtillon's *Alexandreis*, the most popular Medieval Latin epic on Alexander,[82] women only play minor roles acting as signs of the hero's chastity. Since Walter preferred to refer to ladies whom his abstinent protagonist did not fall in love with, Roxane did not feature at all.[83]

Although in Western courtly romances the focus on love is integral to the literary genre,[84] also Rudolf von Ems pays little attention to Roxane. His Alexander aims at glory and wealth rather than at love.[85] Due to a blend of the Greek Romance's death scene of Darius and Curtius' report on Alexander's honourable treatment of the Achaemenid women, Rudolf's protagonist is offered the chance to save Roxane already after Issus.[86] However, after their marriage, she stayed in Persia and was mentioned only once again, when Alexander's chastity was challenged by the Amazon queen.[87]

In contrast, Johann Hartlieb stressing the theme of the dynastic significance of chastity and the sacredness of marriage presented Roxane in an exceptional different light charging her with adultery: In Alexander's absence she had love affairs with several men. As there were difficulties to ascertain which of her kids were fathered by him, they were all charged with bastardy and excluded from kingship.[88] Thus, Hartlieb explained why the empire collapsed after his hero's death excusing his failure to secure succession.

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[81] Iskandarnameh 1978, 14. Cf. Southgate 1978, 206.

[82] Cf. Harich 1987, 245-248; Cary 1956, 63. It was composed in the twelfth century.

[83] *Alexandreis* IV 7-76. Cf. Müller 2008, 267-273; Tiliette 1999, 282-283; Harich 1987, 202-205.

[84] Cf. Müller 2008, 263-264; Cary 1956, 224.

[85] Cf. Wisbey 1966, 86-87. It was composed between 1220 and 1250.

[86] 7719-7770.

[87] 18237-18294. Cf. Ehlert 1989, 97; Wisbey 1966, 87.

[88] Hartlieb, p. 271, l. 25 – p. 272, l. 10. Cf. Müller 2008, 273-277; Ehlert 1989, 98-99. Commissioned by the Bavarian duke Albert III and composed in about 1444/1454, before the succession of his son Sigismund, it might have served to stress the love between his parents as a means of legitimization. There had been rumours that Albert had fathered children by his highly unpopular mistress.

Results

Scarcely visible in her life-time, marginalized by Macedonian factions and regarded as a symbol of Alexander's unpopular Persian policy, Roxane was also paid little attention to in the Greek Alexander Romance. Although she was represented as a Persian princess and Alexander's only wife, she played a minor role. The narrative focused on Alexander's image of the hero of adventures and his continence. Therefore, the love theme that otherwise predominated in the Hellenistic novel was neglected in favour of the moral theme.

As Roxane's portrait in the Greek Alexander Romance influenced Eastern and Western Alexander legends, she mostly remained comparatively featureless and was only given the chance to be more than an obscure figure when the authors left the traditional paths.

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Alexander the Philosopher in the Greco-Roman, Persian and Arabic Traditions[1]

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A key feature of some important ancient Greek and Roman writings on Alexander is their morally loaded interest in the king's connection to philosophy—an association whose origins and implications for both Alexander and ancient philosophy itself have been hotly debated in modern scholarly and popular discourse.[2] Of course, no one in Greco-Roman antiquity nor in the modern era has argued that Alexander was formally a philosopher, but the characterization of him in both contexts variously as a 'philosopher', someone 'philosophical,'or even as a king who appreciated philosophers and sought their company is, to my mind, frequent and influential enough to bear analyisis—especially since this is by no means only a Greco-Roman habit. When I recently read Richard Stoneman's excellent, sweeping survey of the Alexander Romance tradition,[3] I was struck at how far beyond the Greco-Roman world the association between 'Alexander' and 'philosophy' actually goes. Indeed, the earliest book printed in England in English was *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers* (1477), where Alexander has his own chapter as a philosopher; even more intriguing is the fact that *The Dictes and Sayings* go back to the Arabic, not Greco-Roman tradition, as it is an English translation of a French translation of a Latin translation of an 11th century Egyptian work. However, as Faustina Doufikar-Aerts has pointed out in her also-recent and monumental *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, Alexander was not an obviously philosophical figure for Arabs[4]—even less so, I would say, than for Greeks and Romans who were the direct inheritors of his conquests.

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[1] I thank Richard Stoneman and Ian Netton for their invitation to speak at the 'Alexander in Persia and the East' conference at Exeter in Summer 2010, as well as to the Soudavar foundation for their generosity in supporting my attendance. It will be apparent throughout this paper the huge debt I owe here too to Richard Stoneman's work on Alexander and philosophy/philosophers. As a Classicist, I am especially grateful to have had the opportunity to explore literary traditions well outside my area of expertise; being new to the relevant scholarship and lacking knowledge of the Persian and Arabic languages, what I offer is naturally only a starting point for further exploration.

[2] The association of Alexander with philosophy has spawned at least one very influential modern theory: that of Alexander's supposed 'desire' to unify mankind, which W. W. Tarn (especially in *Alexander the Great Volume II: Sources and Studies*, [Cambridge, 1948], 399-449) apparently plucked straight from Pluarch's *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute* and which has reappeared transformed in Mary Renault's *Persian Boy*, for example, and in Oliver Stone's *Alexander*. Plutarch there ascribes egalitarian principles, novel to the Classical Greek mindset which habitually pitted superior Greeks against inferior 'barbarians', to Zeno the Stoic. Tarn reassigned this view to Alexander, but as I have argued elsewhere ('Classicism and *Romanitas* in Plutarch's *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute*, *AJP* 126:1, 107-125) I believe the anachronism runs in the opposite direction and is Romanizing. Such confusions tend to arise, it seems, when readers do not recognize what I call here the 'generalizing' use of philosophy around Alexander.

This paper therefore seeks to examine what Greco-Roman views of Alexander and philosophy have in common with those found in eastern traditions. The association between Alexander and philosophy seems to operate on two levels in each tradition. One level is 'historical', seen in references to Alexander's historical tutleage by Aristotle (and interestingly, to his nephew Callisthenes in the Greco-Roman sources) as well as in his encounters with the Cynic Diogenes and the so-called Brahmans in India. The other level is generalizing or symbolic, where the idea of 'philosophy' or encounters/advisement by groups of philosophers, often lumped together anachronistically, positions Alexander in such a way as to give him cache by comparison, or to critique him by contrast. The context, however, does not always 'match' the philosopher: encounters between Alexander and Aristotle, for example, are not necessarily used to make an Aristotelian point. This does not mean, however, that there is no a 'real' philosophy behind a particular writer's generalizations about Alexander and philosophy. It means that most writers' priority was not to 'do justice' to either Alexander or to a specific philosophical school or philosopher, but to promote a particular idea of philosophy that happened to be relevant to world-conquest—something evidently on the minds of Greeks, Romans, Persians and Arabs alike.

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[3] R. Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (New Haven 2008).

[4] F. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus* (Leuven 2010), 130.

The Greek Tradition

The starting point for discussing Alexander in relation to philosophy is the Hellenistic period, during which we know Alexander became an exemplum for the qualities of the good and bad ruler, although the extant sources are fragmentary. For a long time scholars believed that Roman authors like Quintus Curtius and Seneca who treated Alexander negatively were drawing directly on a 'tradition of hostility' towards the king that was current in Hellenistic philosophical circles.[5] But it seems that the priority of Hellenistic philosophers was not to serve the needs of Alexander's image, but to serve the needs of philosophy itself in theorizing kingship. To paraphrase Richard Stoneman in his 2003 article 'The Legacy of Alexander in Ancient Philosophy,' especially in the new world of one-man rule, the world conqueror who could sometimes act tyrannically was good to think with philosophically.[6]

What we seem to be witnessing is what Stoneman, following John Moles, [7] calls an attitude of 'soft' Cynicism in contrast to the 'hard' Cynicism that would be implied by a tradition of hostility. We see this firsthand in Greek imperial writers like Dio and Plutarch, who sometimes show Alexander being chastised by a cosmopolitan or ascetic figure while avoiding the implication that the king is morally hopeless. In the Greek tradition, there are two recurring figures—Cynics, in fact—who do the chastising. One is Diogenes who, when Alexander asked him if he wanted anything from him, famously told the great conqueror to get out of his sun, a story Plutarch tells in the *Life of Alexander* 14.[8] The entirety of the fourth of Dio's so-called Kingship Orations (*Or. 1-4*) is, in fact, a dialogue between Alexander and Diogenes, the latter of whom Dio clearly deems superior to the former, but of whose wisdom Alexander is shown to be rather accepting. The second Cynic figure, or figures, are the so-called Brahmans, which is the name the tradition used for the naked philosophers of Taxila.[9] These men in fact are sometimes associated with Diogenes—not surprisingly, considering that his pupil Onesicritus was apparently the original source for these episodes. Plutarch makes Alexander look slightly better in this context, emphasizing in the *Life of Alexander* 64 that, because of their ability to wisely answer questions, the king decided not to put the sophists to death for the revolt of Sabbas; in the next passage of the *Life* (65) Plutarch quite neutrally compares the behavior of two Indian philosophers, Calanus and Dandamis (as witnessed firsthand by Onesicritus), judging Calanus less mild than Dandamis and telling the story of how Calanus counciled Alexander to stay focused on the middle of his empire (which naturally Alexander did not). More casually judgmental perhaps is a third writer, Arrian, who among the Greeks and Romans writes the closest to what can be called Alexander 'history'. Arrian belongs to the same literary milieu as Plutarch and Dio, but unlike the latter two he does not promote Alexander in philosophical terms (despite the fact that he was a Stoic). There is less at stake for Arrian when it comes to moral judgment: linking the Brahmans and Diogenes, he points out that while Alexander praised the asceticism of the Indian sophists, 'his actions were different from and contrary to what he commended.' (*Anabasis* 2.1) In the end, even Plutarch's depictions of Alexander's relationship with the sophists in the *Life of Alexander* are not radically more romanticizing of Alexander than Arrian's. What is important above all is that philosophy is being invoked here to shed some light on the king as well as on kingship in general, whatever the message may be.

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[5] This idea was (to my mind convincingly) refuted by J. Rufus Fears, who posited that these attitudes belonged to Roman, not Greek, Stoicism ('The Stoic View of the Career and Character of Alexander the Great.' *Philologus* 118 [1974], 113-30).

[6] R. Stoneman, 'The Legacy of Alexander in Ancient Philosophy,' in J. Roisman (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great* (Leiden 2003), 325-346 (reference on 335).

[7] See Stoneman, 'Legacy,' 332 and J. Moles, 'The Cynics and Politics,' in A. Laks and M. Schofield, eds. *Justice and Generosity*. (Cambridge 1995), 129-158.

[8] The episode also occurs in *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute* (331f), where Plutarch glosses Alexander's response to highlight his 'practical philosophy': 'when remembrance of the philosopher came to him, he would say, 'If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes,' that is to say: 'If I did not practice philosophy through my deeds (*di' ergōn ephilosophoun*), I would pursue it with theoretical arguments.'

As we will see, the 'soft' Cynic interest in Alexander would have a lasting impact on both the eastern and western traditions. But where does Aristotle—the first and most famous philosophical figure in Alexander's life—fit into the picture? Dio, in his subtle way, presents Aristotle self-reflexively, using the latter's mentorship of Alexander as a selling point for his own potential relationship with the *philalexandros* emperor Trajan[10] (who Dio implies throughout his Kingship Orations could really benefit from a philosophical advisor like himself). But he sees Alexander less as a true 'philosopher' than as a work-in-progress. For Arrian and Plutarch, however, the connection between Aristotle and Alexander is interestingly overshadowed by that between the king and Aristotle's nephew Callisthenes, who accompanied Alexander on his campaigns and whose job it was to promote the Macedonian king to a Greek audience. Indeed, Arrian mentions Aristotle only in reference to Callisthenes, implying he was once a pupil of Aristotle ('who had given the words of Aristotle a hearing'; '*Aristotelous…tōn logōn diakēkoota*; *Anab.* 4.9.6), and—in his own self-reflexive moment—chastising him for taking all the credit for Alexander's fame, as Arrian would not presume to do. Plutarch, another self-styled philosopher, credits Aristotle, 'the most famous and learned of philosophers' (*ton philosophōn ton endoxotaton*) for nurturing an Alexander who was 'naturally predisposed to philosophy,' (*pros philosophian empephukōs*) but also points out that this was not enough to keep Aristotle in Alexander's affections. (*Life of Alexander* 7-8). This may foreshadow Plutarch's attitude towards Callisthenes, whom he will later in the *Life* call a 'philosopher' for defying Alexander's demand for *proskynesis* and whose demise he narratively links to the demise of Alexander's own philosophical nature.[11] Interestingly enough, it was possible for an author like Quintus Curtius, who tended to emphasize Alexander's more tyrannical aspects and thus saw Callisthenes as a hero,[12] to not bother mentioning Aristotle at all in a work entirely devoted to Alexander.

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[9] As R. Stoneman discussed in 'Naked Philosophers: The Brahmans in the Alexander Historians and the Alexander Romance,' *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995): 99-114.

[10] E.g. *Or.* 2.15; see also *Or.* 49.4.

What is missing, of course, is much trustworthy detail on how Aristotle influenced Alexander's political philosophy—as opposed to contributing to his general education—, suggesting that even in the Greek Alexander-tradition Aristotle has become semi-symbolic. (And of course we possess nothing written by Aristotle on the Macedonian king.) There is one seeming-exception to this: in *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute*, Plutarch tells us that Alexander rejected Aristotle's notion that he should treat the barbarians as if they were plants or animals (329b); given the rhetorical context it is difficult to confirm or deny this tidbit, which may in fact be a simple extrapolation from Aristotle's theory of natural slavery. The characterization of Callisthenes as a ‘philosopher’, on the other hand, shows even more clearly how slippery the boundary is between the historical and the generalizing use of the concept of ‘philosophy’ around Alexander. This generalizing view is witnessed most strongly in Plutarch’s rhetorical treatise *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute*, where in one passage, for example, he calls Alexander a ‘philosopher’ (*philosophos*) for preferring unity (*homonoia*), peace (*eirēnē*) and commonality of interests (*koinōnia*) for all mankind (*pasin anthrōpois*) in preference to winning for himself luxury (*truphē*) and extravagance (*poluteleia*) (330e); he also references Alexander’s ‘philosophic soul’ (*philosophou…psuchēs*), which encourages him to be in love with wisdom (*psuchēs sophias erān*) and admire wise men (*sophous andras thaumazein*) (331e). Here Plutarch is not referring to any particular type of philosophy, but is making an implied contrast between the stereotypical king, who is too self-interested to care for the common weal and too arrogant to consult other learned men, and Alexander. In another passage, Alexander is contrasted favorably with a whole range of philosophers who wrote nothing, including Pythagoras, Socrates, Arcesilaus, and Carneades, but who had less of an excuse for it since they were not world-conquerors.[13] Even more to the point is a passage from Dio (arguably the most overtly ‘Cynic’ of all extant ancient writers on Alexander) in *Oration* 2.26, a dialogue between Philip and Alexander. Here Alexander tells his father that one should be open to philosophy only inasmuch as it suits their nature (which must, however, include generosity): there is no need for precision:

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[11] *Life* 14: 'In the matter of the obeisance, at least, by refusing sturdily and like a philosopher (*philosophōs*) to perform the act, and by standing forth alone and rehearsing in public the reasons for the indignation which all the oldest and best of the Macedonians cherished in secret, he delivered the Greeks from a great disgrace, and Alexander from a greater, by leading him not to insist upon the obeisance.' On Callisthenes the philosopher in the *Life* see S. R. Asirvatham, 'Olympias' Snake and Callisthenes' Stand: Religion and Politics in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*,' in S. R. Asirvatham, C. Pache, and J. Watrous, *Between Magic and Religion: Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society* (Lanham, M.A. 2001), esp. 118-120. A. B. Bosworth debunked the notion of the 'philosopher Callisthenes' in his article 'Aristotle and Callisthenes,' *Historia* 19:4 (1970): 407-413.

[12] For Curtius's critque of Alexander's treatment of Callisthenes, see *Historiae Alexandri Magni* 8.9.19-22.

> Nor…is it necessary [for a king] to study philosophy to the most precise point (*oude’ au philosophiās haptesthai pros to akribestaton*); he must only live unpretentiously and simply, demonstrating by his very deeds his humane, mild and just—as well as lofty and brave—character, and especially one that rejoices in benefiting others—which is nearest to the nature of the gods. He should, indeed, hear those teachings of philosophy when the opportunity presents itself, provided that these are clearly not opposed to, but work in sympathy with, his character.

We see in both authors, then, the idea that philosophy *in general* is good for Alexander because it is good for kings.

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[13] *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute* 328a-b. See S. R. Asirvatham, *Classicism and Romanitas in* Plutarch’s De Alexandri Fortuna Aut Virtute.’, *American Journal of Philology* 126. 1 (2005): 107-125 (on this passage, see 109).

So far, then, it seems that not only was Alexander a flexible figure in relation to the philosophers he had historically encountered—Aristotle, Diogenes, and the Brahmans—but that philosophy itself could be used flexibly around Alexander for thinking generally about how one-man-rule and conquest in particular could be done 'thoughtfully' rather than rashly. That said, there is a historical specificity to Alexander in these Roman era Greek writers—an identification of him as part of the 'Greek' past that is worth remembering and even glorifying. The historical traces are still strong in the anonymous *Greek Alexander Romance* (otherwise known as 'Pseudo-Callisthenes'), although its overall message—that even the most powerful king in the world must ultimately face his mortality—is new with the Romance tradition and ultimately universal enough to more or less detach Alexander from his historical circumstances altogether as time moves forward.

In the *Romance* (whose earliest extant version is dated to the 3rd century), we see an Alexander who lacks a sense of the limits of conquest, but is nevertheless 'philosophical' when it counts, and sometimes even more so than the 'real' philosophers. Given what we have already seen of the importance of (soft) Cynicism in Roman Greek views of Alexander, when he reaches a moment of enlightenment in the *Romance* it is unsurprisingly a Cynic moment: the meeting with the Brahmans. Here Alexander displays a self-awareness and wisdom that we do not see in his rather cavalier treatment of the Brahmans in Plutarch and Arrian. At the beginning of the question and answer scene—the type of set-piece in which Brahmans appear everywhere in the romance tradition—Alexander approaches these men peacefully and with genuine humility having received a letter from them:

> 'We the naked philosophers address the man Alexander. If you have come to fight us, it will do you no good. There is nothing that you can take from us. To obtain from us what we do have, you must not fight, but ask humbly, and ask it not of us but of Providence above…Your business is war, ours is wisdom.' When Alexander had read this, he approached them in a peaceable manner.

At the end, he offers philosophical statements of his own concerning his mortality, subjection to divine will, his famous *pothos* and the impermanence of the material world:

> Then Alexander said to them all, ‘Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.’ At once they all burst out, ‘Give us immortality.’ But Alexander replied, ‘That is a power I do not have. I too am mortal.’
>
> Then they asked him, ‘Since you are mortal, why do you make so many wars? When you have seized everything, where will you take it? Surely you will only have to leave it behind for others?’
>
> ‘It is ordained by Providence above,’ replied Alexander, ‘that we shall all be slaves and servants of the divine will….For my part I would like to stop making war, but the master of my soul does not allow me… Everyone takes from everyone, and leaves what he has taken to others: no possession is permanent.’[14]

Here the Brahmans act as a supportive foil to a new sort of philosopher-king: Plutarch’s civilizing conqueror has given way to a king-of-the-world who must be pulled down to earth.

As in earlier writers, Aristotle has a limited appearance in the *Romance*. He is mentioned as Alexander’s philosophy teacher, and is also the recipient of a ‘letter’ from the king, another set-piece in the romance tradition that probably originated as a separate piece of literature.[15] Here it is used more or less as a vehicle for telling Alexander’s adventures, including the episode with the Brahmans; it is only in the Islamic texts that these letters will serve a philosophical purpose (see below). Aristotle does come into play one more time in an episode seen only in recension A of the *Romance*: that is, the debate of the ten Athenian orators. [16] This may have a historical core, but as presented it is an anachronistic hodgepodge of historical figures as diverse as Heraclitus and Lysias—something that is perhaps echoed in the hodgepodges of Greek philosophers we’ll see in the Persian and Arabic traditions. The question at stake is whether the Athenians should pay tribute to Alexander. When the orator Aeschines implies that Alexander would be easy for the orators—as ‘teachers’—to placate since he was slavishly obedient to Aristotle, he is mocked by Demades for his cowardice. Narratively neither Aeschines nor Demades win the day (the prize goes to Demosthenes), but one potentially generalizing message of Aeschines’s rejection is that philosophy has no power to make a world-conqueror milder, something that is borne out in Alexander’s life until the very end.

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[14] *Greek Alexander Romance* 3.5-6 (tr. R. Stoneman: *The Greek Alexander Romance* [New York 1991]).

[15] Stoneman, *Romance*, 13.

[16] *Greek Alexander Romance* 2.2-5.

The Persian Tradition

Seven centuries or so after the earliest extant version of the *Greek Alexander Romance* circulated, the Alexander-romance tradition begins to make its mark in Persian literature. As in the Greek tradition, Aristotle and the Brahmans have significant presences in Persian literature. The Brahmans in particular continue occupying the same didactic role in Persian literature as we saw them occupy in the *Greek Alexander Romance*, even when in Islamicized Persian texts the figure of Alexander becomes increasingly idealized.[17] Aristotle, on the other hand, moves from idealized foil to Alexander's weakness, on the one hand, to a philosophical advisor on the other who is useful to the king but whose utility is ultimately limited by his non-Islamic origins.

Here I consider five texts: in poetry, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* ('The Epic of Kings'; 10/11th century), Nizami's *Eskandar-nameh* ('The Book of Alexander', from *Quinary* or *Khamsa*) (12th century), and Jami's *Khiradnama-i Iskandari* ('Alexander's Book of Wisdom,' from *Seven Thrones* or *Haft-Awrang*; 15th century); in prose, two romances, Al-Tarsusi's *Darab Nameh* ('The Book of Dara,' late 12th century) and the Anonymous *Iskandarnameh* ('The Book of Alexander,' 12-14th century).

As Dick Davis points out, the first of these texts alone, *Shahnameh*, is anti-Arab, but not anti-Islam.[18] A historical epic that with its nationalist and ethical preoccupations can also be seen as a work of political philosophy, *Shahnameh* shows some dependence on the *Greek Alexander Romance*. For example, the upshot of Alexander's meeting with the Brahmans in *Shahnameh* is strikingly similar to what we saw in the Romance: note the near-echo between what the Brahmans say in the introduction to their letter to Alexander in Pseudo-Callisthenes and Alexander's own words at the conclusion of the meeting in *Shahnameh*:

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[17] The Persian scholar Minoo Southgate, who studied Persian Alexander literature in the late 1970s, and whose work on these texts I have found otherwise singularly helpful, was clearly influenced by current ideas in Alexander-studies on the Cynic 'tradition of hostility' towards Alexander, and thus tended to overstate the negativity of those scenes where Alexander is 'set straight' by figures like the Brahmans, Queen Candace, etc. See M. S. Southgate, "Portrait of Alexander in Persian Alexander-Romances of the Islamic Era," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 97.3 (1977), 278-284.

[18] D. Davis (tr.) *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*. (New York 2006), xx. All translations of Ferdowsi are Davis's; since I have no access to the Persian original, Davis's translation pages are also my reference to Ferdowsi's text.

> ‘Your business is war, ours is wisdom.’
> (*Greek Alexander Romance* 3.5, in the Brahmans’ letter)
>
> ‘Wise men and warriors are the same.’
> (Alexander’s words in *Shahnameh*)[19]

By transferring the nugget of wisdom from the Brahmans to Alexander and inverting the meaning to equate wisdom and warriorhood, Ferdowsi seems to be appropriating philosophy for Alexander in a way that brings him further from his original historical context and prepares us for his later general exaltation in Persian and Arabic literature, on Persian and Arabic terms. (Alexander has already become half-Persian here, as Ferdowsi makes him the half-brother of Darius—his way of reconciling Alexander’s presence on the scene with the Persian belief that Persia had never been occupied by a foreign invader before the Arabs.) Still, while Ferdowsi tends to surround Alexander with philosophy in ways that go beyond Pseudo-Callisthenes, Alexander is more a ‘philosophy student’ in *Shahnameh* than he was in the Greek romance. For example, whereas in the *Greek Alexander Romance* Alexander visits the Brahmans alone, in *Shahnameh* he is accompanied to this meeting by ‘Greek philosophers’ (Davis 503), and in general tends to bring intellectuals or Greek philosophers with him as envoys when approaching a new country (that is, when he is not going by himself in disguise).[20] Unlike in the Greek tradition, Alexander is subordinated to Aristotle (Aristelis), who is again the recipient of a letter, but not an adventure letter this time: here a dying Alexander tells the philosopher about his plot to eliminate any potential rivals to the Greek power (what Ferdowsi calls an ‘arrogant scheme’). Aristelis’s reaction is a powerful mix of anger and sorrow:

> When this letter was delivered to the Greek sage, his heart seemed to break in two. Immediately he wrote a reply, weeping as if his ink were tears. ‘The king of the world’s missive arrived, and he should give up this evil design of his. As for the evil you have already done, think no more of it but distribute goods to the poor. For the future, abstain from evil and give your soul to God; sow nothing but seeds of goodness in the

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[19] Davis, *Shahnameh*, 505.

[20] For example, sending Nine Knowledgeable Men to see Kayd’s Four Wonders (Davis 478-9), or as general advisors, as when one of his philosophers persuaded him not to cross the ‘deep and boundless ocean’ himself but to send less important men in his stead (Davis 505).

> world. From birth we are all marked for death, and we have no choice but to submit. No one who died takes his sovereignty with him; he leaves, and hands on his greatness to another. Live within limits and do not shed blood of the great families, which will make you cursed until the resurrection…The descendants of the Persian kings should not be harmed so much as by a breath of wind. Summon them to your court, but be generous to them, feast them, and consult with them….'

Here Ferdowsi's own patriotic rivalry with the Greeks ('The descendants of the Persian kings should not be harmed so much as by a breath of wind') seems mixed with the 'soft Cynicism' that derides kingly arrogance, in the form of Aristotle's critique of Alexander—which again I would say is generalized. It seems that the poet's overall project to glorify the Sassanid kings puts limits on Alexander's ability to seem 'philosophical.'

With the Islamicization of Persian literature, Alexander is transformed into a prophet and a missionary. Ferdowsi had presented Alexander as a Christian hero—which is historicizing to the extent that it saw the Macedonian king as being from that 'other' Greco-Roman-Christian world. In Nizami's *Khamsa* a century later, Alexander is still situated in Greco-Roman antiquity—he is called the king of Rūm (i.e. Roman Byzantium)—but is no longer Christian: rather, he has become a prophet of Islam. That latter characterization clearly comes from the Arabic Dhu' l-Qarnayn and Wisdom traditions (sese below), but Nizami also proudly acknowledges at the beginning of his text the ecleticism of the traditions from which he is drawing, which include Pahlavi, Jewish and Christian strands. Philosophy still plays a part. Interestingly, the closest precursor in spirit to Nizami's text, both in its eclecticism and its attitude towards Alexander, is probably Plutarch's *De Alexandri Fortuna aut Virtute*, the sole idealizing Greco-Roman Alexander-text, and one that depicts the king specifically as a selfless civilizer. As Plutarch's Alexander is a Roman Stoic-style civilizer, Nizami's is the embodiment of all good belief systems who goes about establishing the civilizing rule of law in Islam. In the two-part section of the *Khamsa* devoted to him, the *Eskandar-nameh*, Alexander appears in the first part ('The Book of Honor', or *Sarafnamah*) as a conqueror, not one with lust for conquest but rather the desire to civilize; in the second ('The Book of Alexander's Fortune or Wisdom', or *Iqbalnamah ya Khiradnamah-yi Iskadari*) he appears as a sage and a prophet who surrounds himself with an eclectic and completely anachronistic group of philosophers (in one ms., for example, it includes Aristotle, Thales, Apollonius, Socrates, Porphyry, Hermes and Plato).[21] As in Ferdowsi, Alexander is also often seen traveling alongside a philosopher on his visits to the rulers of the lands he will conquer. At the end of the *Eskandar-nameh*, however, he is visited by a messenger of God; from now on, in both Islamicized Persian and Arabic Alexander-texts, we will tend to see the subordination of earthly philosophers to figures such as angels who help connect Alexander more directly to God. In other words, after Ferdowsi, the presence of an Aristotle may enhance Alexander's image, but no longer has the last say on how Alexander is to be perceived by the reader.

The last three Persian works are Jami's 15th century *Khiradnama-i Iskandari* ('Alexander's Book of Wisdom', one of seven books of the *Haft Awrang,* or 'Seven Thrones') and two 12-14th century prose romances, all of which reflect various strands of the *Romance* and Arabic traditions. Again the generalizing or symbolic use of philosophy around Alexander prevails. Jami tells us that Philip hires Aristotle to fill his son with learning and a love of justice (which reminds us that not only Aristotle, but Plato, influenced Arabic philosophy); Philip also asks Aristotle to write for Alexander a book about the secrets of kingship, which, as Jami presents it to us, is presumably an extraction of *Sirr al-Asrar*, translated into English in the 12th century as *Secret of Secrets*. We are also told that Alexander has the sayings of wise men written in gold, and bids Aristotle, Plato and Socrates each to write a book of wisdom for him. And as if one needed further proof of a generalized notion of philosophy, there is even a moment in which Aristotle tells Alexander, Diogenes-style, to get out of his sun! Jami also presented other 'philosophical' set pieces that are prominent in the Arabic Alexander-tradition: the meeting with the Brahmans, the Letters of Consolation, and something called the Funeral Sentences that looks like an expansion of Aristotle's philosophical lament in Ferdowsi. The prose romances, al-Tartusi's *Darabnamah* and the Anonymous *Iskandarnamah,* on the other hand, present Alexander as a full-blooded Persian, and show us the limits of philosophy's use in a religious context. The comparison with Pseudo-Callisthenes is instructive. The romances all seem to downplay the importance of philosophers to Alexander's story, leaving him to be guided instead by someone sent from Providence, which in the case of the *Greek Alexander Romance* is a flying being in the form of a man (2.41) but in the Persian romances it is the great mystic Khidr, from the Sirat tradition that Doufikar-Aerts recently discovered as a separate strand of the Arabic Alexander tradition (see below). It seems that in these Islamicized Persian texts, then, when it comes to gaining the adherence of a 'holy' Alexander, the prophet will inevitably always trump the philosophical advisor.

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[21] Brend, B. *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa Nizami*. (London 1995), 58.

The Arabic Tradition and Conclusion

Even as the historical Alexander is increasingly supplanted by an Islamic one in the east, the desire for writers to position him somehow in relation to philosophy does not change. Doufikar-Aerts has showed that Alexander appears in four major traditions of Alexander-writing in Arabic: the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition; the Alexander Wisdom literature tradition (which can be traced back to Hellenistic and Byzantine sources like the 'Mirror of Princes,'); the Dhu' l-Qarnayn tradition (which emerged from the reference to Alexander in Qur'an verses 18.82-08) and the Popular Alexander-epic (*Sirat*) tradition, which takes from the earlier three traditions,[22] a number of which, we have seen, naturally influenced Persian literature. The emphasis of all is monarchy, both human and divine: Alexander's character ranges from king of kings in the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition to the philosopher-king (and eventually missionary) in the Wisdom literature tradition to the 'pious monotheist and missionary king'[23] in the Dhu' l-Qarnayn tradition to the 'explorer, who, in spite of himself, fulfils the role of missionary king on God's command' in the *Sirat* tradition.[24]

The motif of philosophy is particularly frequent in the Wisdom Tradition, for example, in set-pieces likes the 'Funeral Sentences', where philosophers make pronouncements, one after the other, at Alexander's deathbed. It is in the Wisdom tradition that Aristotle finally gets his due: indeed, Doufikar-Aerts has postulated that the newly-discovered Epistolary Romance, a series of philosophical letters between Alexander and Aristotle that seems to have developed independently from the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition, are a major source for Alexander Wisdom literature. What is striking for the purpose of my argument is that, even at a time when Arab thinkers were deeply engaged with Aristotle, his presence in the Alexander-tradition seems rather fully fictionalized, a function not of Aristotelian philosophy[25] but rather of the desire to use Alexander as a tool for thinking about kingship and its connection to divinity. Once again, we see that the particular philosophy itself is of only incidental importance as compared to ‘philosophy’—or here, ‘Wisdom’—in general.

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[22] Doufikar-Aerts, *Arabicus*, Chapter 4.

[23] F. Doufikar-Aerts "*Sirat al-Iskandar*: an Arabic Popular Romance of Al-Iskandar', in G. Canova (ed.) *Oriente Moderno, Studies on Arabic Epics*, 22.2 , 83 n.s. (2003): 505-520 (ref. to 507).

[24] Doufikar-Aerts, *Arabicus*, 277.

[25] M. Grinaschi ('Un roman épistolaire gréco-arabe', in J. Ch. Bürgel and M. Bridges [eds.], *The Problematics of Power, Eastern and Western Representations of Alexander*

This general association between Alexander and philosophy is a feature of at least two other strands of the tradition as well. While the pious monotheist Dhu’ l-Qarnayn is indeed guided by angels rather than philosophers, the king of kings of the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition learns from Aristotle, the Brahmans, as well as Khidr, and the Sirat tradition is imbued with all sorts of philosophical material from these earlier genres, including parts of the Epistolary Romance, and gives Aristotle a role as a religious teacher who helps convert Alexander (second only to Khidr, who brings about his final conversion). This suggests how important philosophizing about kingship continued to be for Arab thinkers even as, for example, the Wisdom tradition began over time to streamline towards Qur’anic concerns.[26] Alexander—whose ambition and desire (his *pothos*, famous among the Greeks) took him literally to the depths of the ocean and up to the heavens in the romance tradition—has perhaps turned out to be the ultimate tool for thinking about, or even closing, the gap between human and divine rule.

What ties the Greek, Persian and Arabic traditions together in their use of Alexander and philosophy, then? Undoubtedly there is more to be said than is possible in a brief survey, but we can make a few observations. First is the primacy of kingship in all these texts, from Greek to Islamic. It seems clear that to be interested in Alexander is to be interested in kingship first, philosophy second (if at all). For example, while Alexander may learn Everyman lessons about mortality in the romance tradition, that lesson is only interesting because he is a king. The idea that Alexander’s ‘purpose’ is to enable political science explains why philosophy is largely generalized or used symbolically around his image, instead of ‘real’ philosophy being applied to him in some systematic way. Generalized or symbolic philosophy turns out to be for many writers the ultimate earthly yardstick by which they can judge a king’s actions: when Plutarch’s Alexander dominates the ‘real’

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the Great [Bern 1996], 109-123; see esp. 117-118) argued that the Epistolary Romance contained part of an authentic Aristotelian letter *Peri Basileias*, but this is far from secure (Doufikar-Aerts, *Arabicus*, 150 and n. 52). For another example of how Arabic thinkers could have used Aristotle in their theorizing about Wisdom but did not, D. Gutas points to the fact that they did not use his treatises to theorize about maxim collections, or *hikma* (Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope’, *Journal of the America Oriental Society* 101 [1981]: 4-86; see 64-65).

[26] Gutas, ‘Arabic Wisdom Literature,’ 68.

philosophers it is because he is a ‘philosopher’ in his own right, just as when he pronounces philosophical maxims in the Arabic Wisdom literature tradition.

As hinted above, one might also see writing about a philosopher-king as a self-reflexive activity for writers with a humanist bent. On the Greek side, for example, men like Dio Chrysostom, Arrian and Plutarch who identify Alexander positively with philosophy or use philosophy to shame him also tend to be the ones who self-identify as philosophers and thus can claim authority on theories of kingship.[27] As for Persian literature: Ferdowsi’s use of Aristotle to shame Alexander is self-reflexive to the extent that this poet’s project is one of quasi-nationalistic political philosophy. For educated medieval Arabs, ‘wisdom literature constituted the basis of Arab *paideia* (*adab*), and was accordingly an integral part of the upbringing and intellectual capital of all educated Arabic speaking members of medieval Islamic civilization’[28]—hence to write wisdom was in some sense to embody wisdom. Nevertheless, some Islamicized Persian and Arabic texts may show the least self-reflexivity when they talk about philosophy and Alexander because of their focus on the divine realm. In those texts, philosophers are too earthly to provide enlightenment. As Alexander himself reaches enlightenment and transforms from king to prophet, the philosophers—so often the advisors to earthly kings—must give way to the prophets.

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[27] We also see this in moralizing Latin literature, for example the epistles of the younger Seneca, (e.g. in *Ep.* 94).

[28] Gutas, ‘Arabic Wisdom Literature,’ 67.

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In Search of Water of Life:
The Alexander Romance and Indian Mythology

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Water of Life is a popular motif in various mythologies and religions. In mythology there are many stories about magical properties of water, including the story of water which gives immortality to one who finds it. It can be found also in some versions of the *Alexander Romance*, beginning with recension β of the fifth century AD. It is a late addition to the *Romance* since its oldest recension α, represented by the Greek A manuscript, Latin Iulius Valerius and the Armenian version, does not contain this story. The story of the Water of Life is known from recensions β and γ, as well as from the Greek manuscript L and a sixth-century sermon of Jacob of Seroug, appended to the Syriac version of the *Alexander Romance* in Ernest A. Wallis Budge's edition.

The Byzantine β recension contains a short, yet undeveloped story of the Water of Life (Bergson, II 39). Alexander, going through the land of Darkness, orders his cook to take a dried fish and make a dinner of it. The cook finds the stream, in a place less dark and with a pleasant fragrance in the air. The water itself is very bright and shining. When the cook started washing the dried fish in a spring of water, the fish suddenly came to life and slipped away from the cook's hands. He did not reveal to Alexander what happened. The eight-century L manuscript has the same story, albeit much expanded. The cook, having seen what happened to the fish, drew some water from the spring, drank it and did not tell Alexander about its supernatural qualities. Then he approached Alexander's daughter, called Kalē ("Beautiful") and offered her the magical water to seduce her. When Alexander became aware of what happened, he killed the cook and condemned his daughter to a solitary life in the mountains. From that time on her name was Nereide. At this point Alexander knew that he had reached the end of the world, so he ordered a great arch to be constructed in this place to inform anybody who reached that place, that it was the end of the world and that he should turn back. Mysterious birds with human faces and voices told Alexander to turn back, because this place belonged to gods. As a reward they offered to him a victory over the Indian king Poros.

In Jacob of Seroug's sermon (sixth cent. AD), Alexander searches for the Water of Life and he knows that it can be found somewhere in the East, beyond the Land of Darkness. An old man who talks to Alexander, instructs him that this place is full of various springs and wells, and to find the magic one, the fish has to be taken and immersed in every spring. Alexander then orders his cook to take the fish and to check every source of water he comes across. When the dead fish is restored to life in a spring and slips away from the cook's hands, he jumps into the water to catch it. Alexander hears the cook screaming but cannot find him anymore. Jacob explains that God did not want Alexander to find the Water of Life which leaves Alexander sad and disappointed until the end of his life. In Jacob of Seroug's rendition of this story, the Water of Life is to be found near the wall placed by God to protect the world from Gog and Magog. This shows that the source of the Water of Life was near the end of the world.

What begs for explanation is how the motif of the Water of Life found its way to the *Alexander Romance* and what was its original source. The scholars who had been searching for the source of this motif, pointed out that a very similar story appears in the Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh*.[1] The hero, after the death of his dear friend Enkidu, searches for a medicine to cure him. Gilgamesh finds the magical herb, which grows in the bottom of the sea, but he looses it (tablets 9-11). Despite some apparent similarities, like crossing the Land of Darkness and the very search for immortality, the hypothesis does not hold.[2] In the *Romance* Alexander is searching for water, not for an herb of immortality and he, unlike Gilgamesh, does not set out on this endeavour for sake of his dead friend, while the birds who guard this land order Alexander to turn back and in most versions he never enters the land of immortality.

Frequently, the motif of the Water of Life is connected with the journey to the end of the world.[3] D. Ogden in his paper „*Alexander in the Under-*

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[1] B. Meissner, *Alexander und Gilgamos*, Leipzig, 1894, reprinted 1928.

[2] I. Friedlaender *Die Chadhirlegende und der Alexanderroman*, Leipzig 1913, s. 37. K. Rönnow, *Some remarks on Svetadvipa*, Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, Vol. 5 No. 2, 1929, p. 269 , C. Jouanno, *Naissance et métamorphoses du Roman d'Alexandre*, Paris 2002, p. 269.

[3] Hopkins, *The Fountain of Youth*, Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. 26 (1905), p.19, Rönnow, p. 264., Dawkins, M. R, *Alexander and the Water of Life*, Medi-

world"[4] argues that Alexander came to the Underworld where, according to Greek mythology, the souls of heroes dwell. Indeed, the description of the place, where the water of life is, seems very similar to the Greek image of "makarōn nēsoi". However it is still possible that the water of life motif is of oriental origin, because, as far as I know, there is no reviving water in Greek mythology, found by a hero or a human being (besides Glaukos, see below). Moreover, there is no reviving water in the Underworld nor in the Greek Islands of the Blessed. Waters of various properties, including those which have the ability to revive the dead, can be found in India at the boundaries of the human world. These two stories had become one, and have been interpreted together. The story of the Water of Life seems to be essential to the latest recensions of the *Alexander Romance* (there is no Water of Life story in α). Alexander's journey to India, where he hopes to find immortality, defines the principal idea of the *Romance*: Alexander wants to achieve more than any other human being before him, rivaling heroes and divinities as well. He draws inspiration from the exploits of Heracles, and, particularly in the Syriac version, from Dionysus too. The Indian adventures of Heracles and Dionysus are well known.[5] Reaching the end of the world was Alexander's next supernatural achievement, after the descend to the bottom of the sea in diving bell or ascend into the air.

A seemingly obvious interpretation of the motif of Water of Life would see it as a variation on the Greek rendering of marvels of India, something to the tune of the magical springs mentioned by Herodotus (III 23) in the story of the Ethiopians and their magical spring, or the well of liquid gold in Ctesias' *Indica* (Phot, 72, *Ind.* 3 and 14), or of water of truth (Phot, 72, *Ind.* 14) or of water which cures illness (Phot, 72, *Ind.* 30).

The motif of the Water of Life is not altogether alien to Greek mythology. To the best of my knowledge there is one very similar incident

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um Aevum, VI, no. 3, 1937, p. 173., Jouanno C, *Naissance et metamorphoses du Roman d'Alexandre*, CNRS Editions, 2002, p. 268.

In L, Syriac and γ, Alexander knows that the reaches the end of the world.

[4] Ogden D., Alexander in the Underworld, in: Philip II and Alexander the Great. Father and Son. Lives and Afterlives, ed. E. Carney and D. Ogden, Oxford University Press, 2010.

[5] Lévêque P, *Dionysos dans l'Inde, Inde, Grèce ancienne, Regards croises en anthropologie de l'espace*, ed. Jean-Claude Carrière, Evelyne Geny, Marie-Madeleine Mactoux, Françoise Paul-Lévy, 1995, p. 125 – 138., Stoneman, *Alexander the Great. A Life in Legend*, Yale University Press, 2008, p. 68., Dreyer B., *Heroes, Cults and Divinity*, p. 218-234, *Alexander the Great. A New History*, ed. W. Heckel and L., A. Tritle, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. pp. 219 -223., Nawotka, *Alexander the Great*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, chapter: *Expedition to India*, 295-331.

in the story of Glaucus, the son of Sisyphus, transmitted by the fifth-century *Scholia Vetera*[6] to Plato's *Republic*. There, Glaukos one day encountered the spring of immortality, immersed in it and when nobody believed him, he jumped into the ocean to prove his point, and thereupon became a sea god. The unique story of a spring of immortality appears in Greek mythology not earlier than the fifth century, so there is no real evidence that the story of the Water of Life in the *Alexander Romance* is of Greek origin. This story seems to be very old and some scholars connect it with the old Indo-Iranian stories from the Ṛgveda (created probably in the middle of 2nd millennium BC, and written down in the seventh or sixth century BC) and the Avesta (composed no later than the seventh or sixth century BC, written down no earlier than the sixth century AD) about the gods Yama (Yima) and Gandharva (Gandarəwa) who possessed the ancient water of immortality, the Vedic Soma (Haoma). It is curious to observe that the Gandharvas who guard the Soma were pictured as birds with human heads, similarly to the birds with human faces who order Alexander to turn back in the *Romance*. The story of Glaukos' immersion in the spring of immortality is certainly of eastern origin.[7] There are however some dissimilarities between this story and that of the Water of Life in the *Alexander Romance*. The β recension and later versions put the story of the Water of Life in the far East and not in Greece. Then Alexander misses the opportunity to drink the magic water, because it is forbidden for a human being to drink from the source of immortality. The story of Glaukos does not contain this shade of meaning.

In contrast to Greek mythology, Indian mythology and the earliest Indian literature abound in stories of miraculous water. The great Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata*, also contains stories of the water of immortality. It is difficult to determine the period in which the epic was created. Most scholars date it between the fourth century BC to the fourth century AD.[8] But before it was written down, its stories were passed on orally, thus originating in a far more distant past. The *Mahābhārata* is a real treasury of Indian mythology, religion and folklore with all stories are braided into the main story of a war between Pandavas and Kauravas.

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[6] Scholia vetera, 611 D1.

[7] *Yama, Gandharva and Glaucus*, L.D. Barnett, Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, Vol. 4, nr 4, 1928, p. 716.
Glaukos can be identified with a Khiḍr "Green man" . In Islamic tradition Khiḍr is a companion of Alexander, and they find the Fountain of Life (e.g. Southgate, M, S, *Iskandarnamah, A Persian Medieval Alexander Romance*, New York, 1978, p. 55-59) Khiḍr is associated with waters, the same as Glaukus, who become a sea-god.

[8] Hopkins, E. W., *Epic mythology*, Strassburg, 1915, p. 1.

In order to find possible links with the *Mahābhārata* it is necessary to review the circumstances in which Alexander came across the Water of Life. Going through the Land of Darkness, Alexander or rather his cook finds the Water of Life. In all accounts (β, L, Jacob) the place where it happens is less dark and has a pleasant and sweet smell in the air. This is the quality of miraculous springs known already to Herodotus writing about a source in which the Ethiopians bathed to render their bodies shiny and sweet smelling. In fact, he was referring to the Indians here, since the eastern Ethiopians are in his account inhabitants of India.[9] In the later stories of Alexander this whole place is described as very bright and almost white, but this light does not come from the sun. For example: in the story of prophet Mahomet's life by Ibn Hishām of the ninth century Alexander finds a white land, inhabited by sinless people of white skin, similar to the Indian paradise Svietadvipa (The White Island).[10] Another important thing are birds with human faces and voices, who order Alexander to turn back, because he entered to the land of Gods, forbidden to human beings. As a reward the birds promise to Alexander a victory over Poros.

The *Mahābhārata* has a story of Arjuna very similar to that of Alexander.

MBh. 3,25.7-16
uttaraṁ harivarṣaṁ tu samāsādya sa pāṇḍavaḥ
iyeṣa jetuṁ taṁ deśaṁ pākaśāsananandanaḥ
tata enaṁ mahākāyā mahāvīryā mahābalāḥ
dvārapālāḥ samāsādya hṛṣṭā vacanam abruvan
pārtha nedaṁ tvayā śakyaṁ puraṁ jetuṁ kathaṁ cana
upāvartasva kalyāṇa paryāptam idam acyuta
idaṁ puraṁ yaḥ praviśed dhruvaṁ sa na bhaven naraḥ
prīyāmahe tvayā vīra paryāpto vijayas tava

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[9] *A miraculous fountain in India*, K. Karttunen, Arctos XIX, 1985, 55-65. (eastern Ethiopians III 94, Ctesias calls Ethiopians the "*makrobioi*" and places them in India (Phot, 72, Ind 15).

[10] Rönnow, p. 266.
In Indian mythology Svetadvipa is an earthly paradise, not only white and shining but also rich in various precious stones, gold and pearls, which are also considered (the same as nowadays) to be an important element of people's happiness and wealth.(Perry, J. W, *The Isles of the Blest*, Folklore, vol. 3, 1921, p. 171.). It is curious to observe that, when Alexander leaves the Land of Darkness, where the Water of Life was, and comes to the light, he and his men discover that the stones they have picked up in the darkness turn into fine gold (Bergson, II, 41).

na cāpi kiṁ cij jetavyam arjunātra pradr̥śyate
uttarāḥ kuravo hy ete nātra yuddhaṁ pravartate
praviṣṭaś cāpi kaunteya neha drakṣyasi kiṁ cana
na hi mānuṣadehena śakyam atrābhivīkṣitum
atheha puruṣavyāghra kiṁ cid anyac cikīrṣasi
tad bravīhi kariṣyāmo vacanāt tava bhārata
tatas tān abravīd rājann arjunaḥ pākaśāsaniḥ
pārthivatvaṁ cikīrṣāmi dharmarājasya dhīmataḥ
na pravekṣyāmi vo deśaṁ bādhyatvaṁ yadi mānuṣaiḥ
yudhiṣṭhirāya yat kiṁ cit karavan naḥ pradīyatām
tato divyāni vastrāṇi divyāny ābharaṇāni ca
mokājināni divyāni tasmai te pradaduḥ karam

> „At last the son of the player of Paka, arriving in the country of North Harivarsa, desired to conquer it. Thereupon certain frontier-guards of huge bodies and endued with great strength and energy, coming to him with gallant hearts, said ‘O son of Pritha, this country can be never conquered by thee! If thou seekest thy good, return hence! He that entereth this region, if human, is sure to perish. We have been gratified with thee; O hero, thy conquests have been enough. Nor is anything to be seen here, O Arjuna, that may be conquered by thee! The Northern Kurus live here. There cannot be war here. Even if thou enterest it, thou wilt not be able to behold anything, for with human eyes nothing can be seen here. If, however thou seekest anything else, O Bharata, tell us, O tiger among men, so that we may do thy bidding!’ Thus addressed by them, Arjuna smilingly addressing them, said: ‘I desire the acquisition of the imperial dignity by Yudhisthira the just, of great intelligence. If your land is shut against human beings, I will not enter it. Let something be paid unto Yudhisthira by ye as tribute! Hearing these words of Arjuna, they gave him as tribute many cloths and ornaments of celestial make, silks of celestial texture, and skins of celestial origin.”[11]

There is also a similar story of Bhīma, who finds “water of ambrosial taste and cool and light and clear and fresh,”[12] but he is denied to be in this place with the words “Men subject to death cannot sport here.”[13]

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[11] Mahābhārata, ed. P. C. Roy, Calcutta, 1886-1890, vol. II, section XXVIII, p. 67.
[12] MBh, Roy, vol. III, section CLII, p. 324-325.
[13] Idem.

MBh. 3,151.1-8
sa gatvā nalinīṁ ramyāṁ rākṣasair abhirakṣitām
kailāsaśikhare ramye dadarśa śubhakānane
kuberabhavanābhyāśe jātāṁ parvatanirjhare
suramyāṁ vipulacchāyāṁ nānādrumalatāvṛtām
haritāmbujasaṁchannāṁ divyāṁ kanakapuṣkarām
pavitrabhūtāṁ lokasya śubhām adbhutadarśanām
tatrāmṛtarasaṁ śītaṁ laghu kuntīsutaḥ śubham
dadarśa vimalaṁ toyaṁ śivaṁ bahu ca pāṇḍavaḥ
tāṁ tu puṣkariṇīṁ ramyāṁ padmasaugandhikāyutām
jātarūpamayaiḥ padmaiś channāṁ paramagandhibhiḥ
vaiḍūryavaranālaiś ca bahucitrair manoharaiḥ
haṁsakāraṇḍavoddhūtaiḥ sṛjadbhir amalaṁ rajaḥ
ākrīḍaṁ yakṣarājasya kuberasya mahātmanaḥ
gandharvair apsarobhiś ca devaiś ca paramārcitām

rākṣasā ūcuḥ
ākrīḍo ’yaṁ kuberasya dayitaḥ puruṣarṣabha
neha śakyaṁ manuṣyeṇa vihartuṁ martyadharmiṇā
devarṣayas tathā yakṣā devāś cātra vṛkodara
āmantrya yakṣapravaraṁ pibanti viharanti ca
gandharvāpsarasaś caiva viharanty atra pāṇḍava
anyāyeneha yaḥ kaś cid avamanya dhaneśvaram
vihartum icched durvṛttaḥ sa vinaśyed asaṁśayam
tam anādṛtya padmāni jihīrṣasi balād itaḥ
dharmarājasya cātmānaṁ bravīṣi bhrātaraṁ katham

„’Having reached that spot, Bhimasena saw in the vicinity of the Kailasa cliff, that beautiful lotus lake surrounded by lovely woods, and guarded by the Rakshasas. And it sprang from the cascades contiguous to the abode of Kuvera. And it was beautiful to behold, and was furnished with a wide-spreading shade and abounded in various trees and creepers and was covered with green lilies. And this unearthly lake was filled with golden lotuses, and swarmed with diverse species of birds. And its banks were beautiful devoid of mud. And situated on the rocky elevation this expanse of excellent water was axceedlingly fair. And it was the wonder of the world and healthful and of romantic sight. In that lake the son of Kunti saw the water of ambrosial taste and cool and light and clear and fresh: and the Pandava drank of it profusely. And that unearthly recepta-

> cle of waters was covered with celestial Saugandhika lotuses, and was also spread over with beautiful variegated golden lotuses of excellent fragrance having graceful stalks of lapis lazulis. And swayed by swans and Karnadavas, these lotuses were scattering fresh farina.”
> (…)
> “Rakshasas said: ‘O foremost of men, this spot is dear unto Kuvera, and it is his sporting region. Men subject to death cannot sport here. O Vrikodara, the celestial sages, and the gods taking the permission of the chief of the Yakshas, drink of this lake, and sport herein. And, O Pandava, the Gandharvas and the Apsaras also divert themselves in this lake. That wicked person who, disregarding the lord of treasures, unlawfully attempteth to sport here, without doubt, meeteth with destruction. Disregarding him, thou seekest to take away the lotuses from this place by main force.”[14]

Both Alexander and Arjuna are denied entrance to the land of Gods always placed in the north. Then there are quite numerous stories about healing water and water of eternal youth or eternal life. A wise man, Cyavana, gained eternal youth and immortality by immersion in the magical water.

MBh. 3,123.11-17
tāv abrūtāṁ punas tv enām āvāṁ devabhiṣagvarau
yuvānaṁ rūpasaṁpannaṁ kariṣyāvaḥ patiṁ tava
tatas tasyāvayoś caiva patim ekatamaṁ vr̥ṇu
etena samayenainam āmantraya varānane
sā tayor vacanād rājann upasaṁgamya bhārgavam
uvāca vākyaṁ yat tābhyām uktaṁ bhr̥gusutaṁ prati
tac chrutvā cyavano bhāryām uvāca kriyatām iti
bhartrā sā samanujñātā kriyatām ity athābravīt
śrutvā tad aśvinau vākyaṁ tat tasyāḥ kriyatām iti
ūcatū rājaputrīṁ tāṁ patis tava viśatv apaḥ
tato ’mbhaś cyavanaḥ śīghraṁ rūpārthī praviveśa ha
aśvināv api tad rājan saraḥ praviśatāṁ prabho
tato muhūrtād uttīrṇāḥ sarve te sarasas tataḥ
divyarūpadharāḥ sarve yuvāno mṛṣṭakuṇḍalāḥ
tulyarūpadharāś caiva manasaḥ prītivardhanāḥ

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[14] Idem.

> "They again spoke unto her: 'We two are celestial physicians of note. We will make thy lord young and graceful. Do thou select one of us, viz. ourselves and thy husband, - for thy partner. Promising this do thou, O auspicious one, bring hither thy husband – O king greeably to their words she went to Bhrigu's son and communicated to him what the two celestials had said. Hearing her message, Chyavana said unto his wife – Do thou so – having received the permission of her lord, (she returned to the celestials) and said – Do ye so – Then hearing her words viz. Do ye so, they spoke unto the king's daughter – Let thy husband enter into water. Thereat Chyavana desirous of obtaining beauty, quickly entered into water. The twin Aswins also, O king, sank into the sheet of water. And the next moment they all came out of the tank in surpassingly beautiful forms, and young and wearing burnished ear-rings."[15]

This story appears in the part of the *Mahābhārata* called *Tīrtha-yatra Parva* (MBh, III, section LXXXII - CLV), the great catalogue of various holy and magical springs and wells, in that of those who give immortality and eternal youth to one who bathed in it. The same motif is well attested in later Indian literature as well, e.g. the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, a collections of Indian fairy tales, probably of the ninth century AD, contains the story of the bodhisattva Vintimatī, whose dead body sprinkled with magical water comes to life.[16]

There is also another aspect of magical water in India. Indians believed that the whole world was surrounded by waters of magical properties. If Alexander reached the end of the world he may have come across the boundary river. In the *Upaniṣads*, the oldest philosophical texts of India composed around the mid-first millenium BC, we find the Vijarā river (Sanskrit "*vi-jarā*" – without old age, ageless, deprived of old age). After crossing this river the souls of men gained immortality.[17] Similarly the river Vaitaraṇī marked the boundary between the human world and the land of the dead.

> MBh. 3,114.14-15
> yudhiṣṭhira uvāca
> upaspr̥̥śyaiva bhagavann asyāṁ nadyāṁ tapodhana

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[15] MBh, Roy, vol. III, section CXXIII and CXXIV.

[16] Kathāsaritsāgara, 72. *The Ocean of Story*, transl. C. H. Tawney, 1924, vol. VI, p. 98. from: E. Washburn Hopkins, *The fountain of youth*, Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. 26 (1905), pp. 1-67.

[17] Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, I 4a. ed. P. Olivelle, *The Early Upanisads. Annotated Text and translation*, Oxford, 1998, p. 328-329.

> mānuṣād asmi viṣayād apetaḥ paśya lomaśa
> sarvām̐l lokān prapaśyāmi prasādāt tava suvrata
> vaikhānasānāṁ japatām eṣa śabdo mahātmanām
>
> “Yudhisthira said – ‘O Lomasa! How great must be the force of a pious deed! Having taken my bath at this spot in a proper form, I seem to touch no more the region inhabited by mortal men! O saint of a virtuous life, I am beholding all the regions!”[18]

Then the mysterious river Silles, in which nothing can float, mentioned by Ctesias[19] and Megasthenes[20] which is also the boundary river. According to the Indian tradition the river Silles flowed in the land of the Uttarakurus,[21] a people famed for longevity. The Silles was difficult to cross, because it turned into stone everything it touched. It is described as very shiny and bright, in a very similar way to the source of immortality in the *Romance*. It seems to me that the Water of Life motif has something in common with Indian beliefs of magical boundary rivers. Alexander reaches the end of the world and near to that place he finds the magical spring which can revive the dead or enable one to pass into the other world, the dwellings of the gods. It must be some kind of interpretation of old Indian beliefs.

Although there is not, to the best my knowledge, an exact earlier Greek match for the story of the Water of Life known from the *Alexander Romance*, I have been trying to point out striking parallel motifs in the earliest Indian literature. It abounds in stories of magical waters, including those of water of immortality and eternal youth. Beginning from the oldest Indo-Iranian stock, through the epics and fable up to present times, water has played a tremendous role in culture, religion and legends of India. Such elements as shining bright water, guardians who defend the access to the water or to the dwellings of the gods even against heroes and demigods, the presence of the water of life at the border of the world, are distinctive for Indian legends. Having in mind that these motifs are far less common in Greek mythology and some of them entirely absent, the Indian origin of the story of water of life in the *Alexander Romance* seems likely. I do not intend to wander into the speculative, but a question as to the ways in which the story of the Water of Life made it into the *Romance* needs to be asked.

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[18] Mahbharata, III, CXIV, p. 249.

[19] Phot. 72, Ind. 30 (Jacoby).

[20] Sachse J., *Le mythe de Śilā, fleuve indien,* Eos, Comentarii Societas Philologae Polonorum, vol. LXX, 1982, fasc. 2, 238.

[21] Ibidem, p. 239.

It is generally accepted that the *Alexander Romance* evolved from the semi-factual account of the recension α to the more and more marvelous story telling of later versions, beginning with the recension β. Its author, in search of making the narrative richer and more interesting, added the motif of the Water of Life borrowed from the stock of legends of India, the land famed for its marvels. There was certainly more than one route of transmission of stories about wonders of India to the Western world and the exchange of ideas paralleled the trade in goods. Besides Indian merchants calling at Alexandria, we know of intellectuals on both sides claiming to have visited India and the Mediterranean. An early example of the flow of Alexander the Great stories in opposite direction is the Indian poem *Harṣacarita*[22] of Bāṇa. This is a story of life of king Harṣa, written in 630 AD. There is an episode in which Harṣa is visited by a young princess, and they speak about great heroes who managed to conquer the whole world. One of them is "*alesaćanda*", which is the Sanskrit rendition of Alexander.[23] In addition they mention that this king was near the kingdom of women, but did not enter it. It is surely a reflection of one of Alexander the Great's adventures portrayed in the *Romance*. In the α recension, opposite to the tradition of Alexander historians, Alexander exchanges letters with leaders of the Amazons but does not go into their country. Hence the Alexander Romance was known, directly or indirectly, in India of the seventh century AD and possibly earlier. In all probability related stories flew both ways.

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[22] *Harṣacarita of Bāṇa*, translated by E .B. Cowell and F. W. Thomas, London, 1897, p. 210.

[23] S. Levi, *Alexander and Alexandrias in Indian literature*, 1936, p. 414.

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The Kingship of Alexander the Great in the Jewish Versions of the Alexander Narrative

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The Romances of Alexander and the Alexander Romance

The problem of Alexander's kingship in the tradition of Jewish literature cannot be analysed without having first asked a few questions – questions which, as it turns out, will make the discussion at the same time easier and frighteningly more complicated, as they add a broad historical and cultural scope to an otherwise not so large body of Jewish texts, ancient and medieval, dealing with the legend of Alexander the Great.

The first of those questions is the problem of the sources and their nature. What is the place of the various Jewish versions of the *Alexander Romance* in the general history of the text? And – in case of the older texts, such as the notions in 1Macc and Josephus – can we even talk about *The Alexander Romance*? What are the sources of the Jewish Alexander narratives and to what extent can we talk in their case about a development independent from the main line of the Romance – the line that has produced both the canonical Greek and Latin versions and, subsequently, the Late Medieval Jewish redactions of the Romance.

Of the Jewish narratives on Alexander the best known and the one receiving the majority of scholarly attention is obviously the version of Josephus. In Ant. XI Josephus has presented a narrative on Alexander's visit to Jerusalem. It has become probably the most lasting and most important contribution of the Jewish Alexander legend to the Western tradition of the Romance: its inclusion in Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* has made it popular enough in the Christian world to guarantee it a place in vast majority of existing Western versions of the *Romance*. Scholars usually agree that the Jerusalem narrative in Josephus was developed independently and may be treated as a proof of the fact that the independent local variants of Alexander

The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East, 339–348

legend had existed prior to or at the same time as the probable first oral compositions of what has later become Pseudo-Callisthenes' romance.

Similar narratives in slightly differing variations exist in the *Talmud* (*Megillat Taanit* 9, *Yoma* 69a, scholium to *Megillat Taanit* 3, *Genesis Rabbah* LXI, 7). These versions, according to Israel J. Kazis,[1] are independent from Josephus' account; rather, they all should regarded as derivates of oral tradition.[2] Similar is the attitude of van Bekkum,[3] who sees the version of Josephus as developing independently from Pseudo-Callisthenes. In any case, the Jerusalem narrative must have been popular: a version of the same story can be found, in slightly more elaborate form, in version C of the *Romance of Alexander*.

The narrative in Josephus is in itself diverse and probably originated as a compilation of material taken from various sources, yet it is uncertain whether the compilation was made by Josephus himself or by the source he was using.[4] This material, while probably not directly derived from any form of the Pseudo-Callisthenes romance (if, such a narrative even existed in the 1st c. AD[5]), may, however, serve as a valuable commentary and supplement, shedding additional light on the development of the *Romance of Alexander* as well as on the process of incorporating local traditions and elements into its bulk.

In addition to that strand of Alexander narrative, the Jewish tradition has also the proper versions of the *Romance*: The 14th c. Mss. London and Paris comprise one version, while in Mss. Modena, Bodleian and Damascus one can find a slightly different one, of a more fantastic character. Another version of Hebrew *Alexander Romance* can be found in Ms. Parma; moreover, there is also one more 14th c. redaction, known as *Sefer Toledot* and composed by Immanuel ben Jaakob Bonfils. These versions, based most probably on Arabic traditions, are well worth a separate study, but, as such, will not be considered in my paper, mainly due to the scope of the material.

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[1] Kazis 1962: 7-8.

[2] Similarly Donath 1873, Wünsche 1879, Pfister 1975; Nöldeke 1890 points at possible (lost) historical sources of this narrative, although the historicity of the Jerusalem episode is rarely taken into account by modern scholarship;the claims of historicity are rejected by Goldstein 1993, p. 70-1;, see also Gruen 1998: 193-4 on the possible date of composition.

[3] van Bekkum 1986: 218.

[4] Stoneman 1994: 37–53.

[5] Arguments against can be found in Merkelbach 1977.

The first two problems, then, are the sources and their mutual dependence and/or originality as well as their relation to the Greek Romance tradition.

The third problem is of more general nature: it is a problem of the Jewish understanding and evaluation of kingship. One must take into account at least a few factors here: the tradition inherited from the times of the Davidic monarchy, the attitude towards the Maccabean rulers and the evaluation of the foreign (Persian, Greek, Roman) emperors and kings that ruled the Jewish people throughout the ages, including, but not limited to, the problem of the royal cult. Each of those attitudes is a significant factor in the forming of the image of Jewish Alexander and each must be, I believe, taken into account.

To make a long story short, or at least shorter: it seems that ancient Jewish society never fully trusted monarchy as an institution: the prohibitions and constrictions of Deut. 17.14–20 were deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the people and the prevalent opinion was that the rightful ruler of Israel was, above all else, God. *Ancient Israel itself,* as Benjamin Wright observed, *had a long and somewhat difficult history of kingship.*[6] Then there is a problem of foreign rulers: on one hand, paradoxically, for the Jews they were sometimes easier to accept as rightful rulers than were the Jewish kings themselves. It might even be surmised that Cyrus the Great, as well as later Alexander in Josephus, could be treated as the God's anointed[7] and therefore rightful heirs to the Davidic line. On the other hand, however, one must notice that there is often more than a fair share of subversiveness in the description of even those foreign kings who are beneficial to the Jewish people. A specially important feature of those narratives seems to be their judeocentrism: the description of a given king's rule in the Jewish authors is mostly concentrated on his (or, in rare cases, her) attitude and actions towards the Jews. What is true about the descriptions of the Achaemenid monarchy in Jewish literature[8] is also true about the kingship of Alexander: he is often judged by the Jewish authors according to his presumed stance towards the Jews and towards their enemies.

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[6] Rajak et al. 2007: 77.

[7] Baltzer 2001: 224–25.

[8] Briant 2000: 235–45.

The Alexander narratives in Josephus

I would like to start my analysis with the passage from Josephus – definitely not the oldest one – for two reasons: firstly, because of its popularity and importance in the development of the later Romance traditions; secondly – and in this case more importantly – because of the number of specific features in the image of Alexander occurring here; the same features can, in my opinion, be found as well in other Jewish versions of the Alexander legend and the passage in Josephus exemplifies them very well.

The Alexander narrative can be found in the last chapter of the 11th book of Josephus' *Antiquitates*; its main part is the story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and his meeting with the High Priest Jaddus.

The passage itself is interesting, especially as far as composition goes (S. Cohen[9] as well as Erich S. Gruen[10] both stress the fact that the composition is multilayer and probably inspired by different traditions); I would like to focus almost exclusively on the image of Alexander as king.

Firstly, it seems worth noting that Josephus uses the character of Alexander as a tool to bind and combine various strands of the narrative: the universal one, dealing with events in Macedonia and the Persian empire, the Samaritan one, concerning the building of the Mount Gerizim Temple and the Jewish one, concentrating on the events in Jerusalem. Alexander's person and actions add a global, universal perspective to the local history. It also adds historical framework: the narrative sequence starts with the death of a king (Philip II: Κατὰ τοῦτον δὴ τὸν καιρὸν καὶ Φίλιππος ὁ Μακεδόνων βασιλεὺς ἐν Αἰγαῖς ὑπὸ Παυσανίου τοῦ Κεράστου ἐκ δὲ τοῦ τῶν Ὀρεστῶν γένους δολοφονηθεὶς ἀπέθανεν, 304) and with the death of a king, this time Alexander, it ends (Τελευτήσαντος δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἡ μὲν ἀρχὴ εἰς τοὺς διαδόχους ἐμερίσθη, 346)

Alexander is by far the most interesting of characters presented in this passage, due to the ambiguity of his portrayal. I believe that there are certain features of his character that correspond with three main narrative strands in the passage.

Firstly, therefore, there is Alexander **the universal king** *par excellence*, whose main area of expertise is waging the war; we also see him as a diplomat (317) and *euergetes* (317). Such image of Alexander, with a number of features conventionally praised in Hellenistic royal panegyrics – can be found in the short general passages opening the Jerusalem narrative and in the interwoven sentences that describe the defeat of Darius and serve as a background to the events in Jerusalem.

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[9] Cohen 1982.

[10] Gruen 1988: 192-3.

Secondly there is **Alexander the evil/alien ruler** whose main aim is to subjugate – and to persecute – the Jews; such an image overlaps partly with the previous one, but can mostly be seen in the Samaritan strand of the narrative. Part of this image is the vision of Alexander as one of the *sequence* of foreign kings (in this case, the successor of Philip and Darius and the forerunner of the Diadochoi). This, as such, does not have to have any negative connotations and can just as well be a general, universal feature; nevertheless, within the Jewish tradition, I would point at the earlier example of 1 Macc. (1 Macc. 1-8), where Alexander appears directly in the context of being first in the line that would end with the wicked Antiochus Epiphanes. The character of the sequence is reinforced by the similarities between Alexander and another king, Darius, especially as well as their attitude towards the Samaritans is concerned: both are foreign rulers actively supporting the enemies of Israel. Such a construction of the character of Alexander fits very well the epiphany narrative that Cohen[11] believes to be crucial for this passage. Such a narrative was usually concerned with the salvation of a people or a city from seemingly impossible circumstances due to the help of a god; the same god later punishes severely the attackers. Among Greek authors such stories can be found e. g. in Pausanias (10.23.3, the salvation of the citizens of Themisonion from the Gauls due to a prophetic dream) or Plutarch (Luc. 10, 2-3: the story about Kyzikos saved from the armies of Mithridates). In the structure of the epiphany narrative in Josephus Alexander plays the role of the evil attacker, who in his pride wants to punish the Jews for their fidelity towards Darius and whose brutal and bloodthirsty army is ready to destroy Jerusalem and murder its inhabitants. Any reader familiar with that model of narrative would expect him to be punished severely by the protective deity of Israel.

But in Ant. XI, 8 the events develop differently. Far from being just a vicious attacker, Alexander turns out to have been God's chosen all along, **the foreign king-benefactor blessed by God** (333-4 τοῦτον γὰρ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους εἶδον ἐν τῷ νῦν σχήματι ἐν Δίῳ τῆς Μακεδονίας τυγχάνων, καὶ πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν διασκεπτομένῳ μοι, πῶς ἂν κρατήσαιμι τῆς Ἀσίας, παρεκελεύετο μὴ μέλλειν ἀλλὰ θαρσοῦντα διαβαίνειν: αὐτὸς γὰρ ἡγήσεσθαί μου τῆς στρατιᾶς καὶ τὴν Περσῶν παραδώσειν ἀρχήν). Alexander still exhibits all those features that make him an example of an accomplished leader. He is a man of action, ready to make swift and right decisions,[12] be it an attack on Jerusalem, the recognition of the High Priest, the interpretation of the Book of Daniel found in the Temple or the judgment between the Samaritans and the Jews. At the same time, however, to this set of royal features one more is added: namely, Alexander as the king chosen by God. Thus he becomes a benefactor of the Jews, who puts the Jewish people at a very special place in his newly-formed kingdom: they are at the same time allowed to live according to their own, separate traditions (338-9) and actively participate in the life of the state (the right to enter royal military service, 339). Alexander himself is the person who combines the features of a foreign (Greek/Macedonian) conqueror and ruler with some characteristics of a Jew. It can be seen for the first time in the central scene of the passage: the meeting of Alexander and Jaddus. When the Macedonians are approaching, they are dangerous foreigners; but from the moment he sees the High Priest, Alexander turns into a mediator, translating the Jewish belief and customs to his fellow Macedonians (the conversation with Parmenio). He also shares with the Jews three more important features. He is the God's chosen ruler, he believes in the same God[13] and he is both willing and able to interpret the Jewish prophetic writings, in this case the Book of Daniel. Thus Alexander turns from the usurper and conqueror into a rightful king, justly ruling – not unlike Cyrus the Great – over the peoples and lands that were given to him by God's will.

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[11] Cohen 1982: 49-55.

Judeocentrism, important in the descriptions of the foreign kings,[14] can be found also in Josephus: the motivations for all the characters' behaviour are directly connected with the Jewish sphere of things. Leaving aside the other characters, let us concentrate on Alexander. His wish to rule the world has been reinforced and the fulfillment of his goal promised by God, and not once, but twice: once in a dream, directly, and once in the prophecy of Daniel, given to Alexander, one may assume, as a gift from God Himself. Such a motivation supports Cohen's thesis[15] that the second part of the story can be treated as an *adventus* narrative – a return of the rightful ruler to his city – and corresponds with Josephus' ideological stance in this passage: namely, with the opinion that Alexander is the rightful and legal ruler of the Jews, because it was God who put him in this position.

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[12] Gruen 1998: 196.

[13] One may add, however, that Alexander never rejects the other gods, a fact duly noted and criticized by Augustine (*Civ. Dei* XVIII, 15, 2); cf. Cohen (1982: 57-60). it seems to me a touch of historical realism on the part of Josephus.

[14] cf. Briant 2000: 235–45.

[15] Cohen 1982: 45-9; the examples are mostly from the papyri.

The fact that Alexander's image has been given a number of Jewish features mirrors a similar tendency present in all versions of Alexander's tales and the *Romance*; the tendency to change Alexander from an alien to the member of a given community seems rather widespread. But in the case of Josephus, (and some other Jewish compositions on Alexander – not necessarily, however, the Jewish versions of *The Romance*) such a tendency is to some extent supported, and to some – counterbalanced by the presentation of Alexander not necessarily as exactly Jewish (he is "Egyptian", for example, in the Greek Romance, being the son of Nectanebo), but rather as a foreign benefactor-king – a concept deeply rooted in the Jewish culture.

Before and after Josephus

Similar traits of Alexander can be seen in other Jewish works; the duality of Alexander's image – he is presented both as a perfect ruler and as the first of the wicked kings – seems a standard feature here, although it is worth noting that some of the vices typically ascribed to Alexander in Greek and Roman literature are never mentioned in Jewish writings .

Let us then start with a text older than the account of Josephus: 1 *Macc.* 1-8. Here Alexander is placed firmly as the first of the foreign rulers of the land; his characteristics as a universal ruler and king of all the world are combined with the features of an evil tyrant. Alexander the king both inherits (1) and hands over (6) the royal power and uses this power to conquer the lands, in fact, the whole world (1-3). He is, in addition to those general features, proud beyond measures (3-4) and – most importantly – first in the sequence of the increasingly evil kings. The line of succession will end with the evil king *par excellence*, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Interestingly enough, the narrative in 1 Macc., composed relatively early (mid-2nd c. B. C. E.), is clearly ahistorical in details: the difference between this version and the well-known historical facts from the life of Alexander is nowhere more clear than in v. 6, where it is stated that Alexander himself has divided his kingdom between the Successors. Alexander as presented here, with his pride and his insatiable lust for conquest, can be treated as a forerunner of Antiochus, his less dangerous "first version". Nowhere in this passage can any trace of Alexander's positive feelings towards the Jews – otherwise a popular motif – be detected. This stance can, I believe, be explained by the genre and type of literature that 1 Macc. represents: it is not, in fact, a historical work per se, but a propagandistic history, designed to legitimize the rule of the Hasmonean dynasty. Alexander as an example of kingship appears also in the prophecy of *Daniel*, mentioned already in the context of Josephus.

Rabbinic treatises quite often repeat the stories from the life of Alexander. Their sources are a rather debatable issue: the majority of scholars believe that these accounts are independent from Josephus and his version; can they prove, possibly, an existence of an oral Alexander narrative, something akin to what Martin Braun described as national hero romance? I would like to look just at a few examples here, leaving aside a number of interesting other motifs to be found in the Talmudic Alexander literature.

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezier (**פרקי דרבי אליעזר**), an 11th c. Rabbinic treatise of a Midrashic-Haggadic character, is a commentary on Gen. and parts of Ex. and Nb. Alexander is placed here within a group of universal rulers, together with God, Nimrod, Joseph, Solomon, Achab, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus the Great and the Messiah. As the list proves, the inclusion itself does not guarantee that a king is good, only successful. Alexander himself rules from one end of the world to the other (cf. Dan. 8:5). Interestingly enough, a number of motifs familiar from various redactions of *The Alexander Romance* can be found here. Most interestingly, the treatise uses a number of narratives often found in the Romance, but changes the emphasis. The well-known story of Alexander's travel to the end of the Earth and his ambition to go and explore heaven is used here to illustrate one of the typical features of an evil king, his pride. It is stated expressly that this is actually the reason for Alexander's death and the division of his kingdom (cf. Dan. 11:4): he has been punished by God for his excessive pride and lust for knowledge. The conventional Romance motifs have been reworked here and elevated to an eschatological scale.

The *Tamid*, (Heb. תָּמִיד) is the ninth or tenth tractate of the order *Kodashim* in the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud. In sections 31b-32a it presents a dispute of Alexander with the wise men of the South. The dispute as such has been rather widely discussed;what I would like to point out is the image of the king that comes out of this exchange.

Alexander in this story has a number of features that seem directly rooted in the Greek/Latin tradition of Alexander literature. His quick anger, when he threatens the wise men with death, his pothos and megalomania are well-known features in the history of Greek Alexander literature. The same can be said about one of the answers he gives, *Let him be a friend of rule and government and use his position to the good of mankind*. One cannot help but think about the concept of Alexander as a perfect monarch in Plutarch. Once more the problem of the sources comes up – how did the story of

Alexander's longing to know everything and go everywhere end up in a Talmudic treatise?

The story is interesting, because it combines the features of the good king, who is brave, wise and caring for his people as well as generous (the element of king benefactor visible in the motif of giving *garments of purple* (...) *and chains of gold* to the wise men), with those of a tyrant, quick in his anger and ready to kill those with whom he disagrees. The emphasis here is not on Alexander's kingship, yet one cannot help but notice that at that time the image of Alexander as (foreign) king *par excellence*, one who rules *to the ends of the Earth* is already deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the Jewish authors. Such a connection is so strong that in *Midrash Tehillim* (11th c.) 93, 5 as well as 11th aggadic compilation named *Yalkut Shimoni* 93, 848 we found a story featuring another universal ruler, emperor Hadrian, to whom a famous feat of Alexander, the descent into the sea, is ascribed. Apparently what Alexander did, other rulers must have imitated.

In the Rabbinic treatise *Avoda Zarah* (3, 1, 42c), pertaining to Jews living amongst Gentiles, we can also find the stories of Alexander, once again supporting the idea of Alexander as universal king. True, he does have a number of the features of an evil king here, especially pride and the *pothos* that makes him want to know all and conquer all; but the emphasis here is on Alexander who is a ruler of the entire world. The character of his rule is not elaborated upon: what counts is its cosmic scale. Alexander here flies to heaven to see *the world look like a ball* underneath him and his rule is juxtaposed with the one that God has. Alexander, the treatise states, rules over all earth and thus his rule is lesser than that of God, who rules also over the seas. One is tempted to see here a reflection of a familiar motif, well known from Alexander literature, of the invincible con queror who, however, cannot defeat the forces of nature and finally succumbs to death. He can be the lord of all earth, but he cannot control the natural world – this is, after all, a domain of God.

Conclusions

The image of Alexander in Jewish tradition is, as the recent book of Ory Amitay proved,[16] both multifaceted and fascinatingly varied. The representations of Alexander the king seem to take a prominent place among those facets and while they share many characteristics with other Alexander traditions, both Eastern and Western, they also have been, in many ways, influenced by the local, Jewish concepts and ideas, thus adding a new set of meanings to the large repository of the legendary Alexander material.

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[16] Amitay 2010.

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Alexander in *Bavli Tamid*: In Search for a Meaning*

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Growing up in Israel in the 1980's, I never read rabbinic literature. In the political and cultural atmosphere of the time, such a seemingly innocuous activity was regarded as a religious and political statement, which did not conform to my ideas in either of these fields. It is the wonderful irony of life that only during my sojourn in Berkeley, ten time zones away from Israel and farther West than even Alexander dreamt of going in the wildest of his "last plans", did I first become acquainted with the rabbinic Alexander.[1] I thus learnt a double lesson. First, that Alexander the Great may be found everywhere. Second, that rabbinic literature can be studied academically, without entailing religious and political connotations. In short, Alexander reconciled me to rabbinics. It is thus fitting that this paper focus on one way in which rabbinic world-view has been reconciled to Alexander.

> *Ten things did Alexander Macedon ask the elders of the Negev:*[2]
> (1) *He told*[3] *them: "is the distance greater from the sky to the earth or from east to west?" They told him: "from east to west, for to know: when*

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* This research has been supported by the Israel Science Foundation (79/09).

[1] In a seminar by Prof. Daniel Boyarin on tractate *'Avodah Zarah* (foreign worship) of the Babylonian Talmud (known in Hebrew simply as "*Bavli*", the term I shall use throughout this paper). The famous episode from the *Alexander Romance* concerning Alexander's flight-apparatus (2.41 = Stoneman 1991: 123), and his realization that the world was in fact round, was used in the High-Middle-Age commentary *Tosfot* (on 41a) to demonstrate why a statue bearing a globe is not to be treated as mere decoration but rather to be shunned as an idol. The story of Alexander's flight cited by the *Tosfot* appears in *Talmud Yerushalmi 'Avodah Zarah* 3.1 (42.3). See further in Amitay (2010: 72-73, 191-192).

[2] The text given here appears in *Bavli Tamid* 31b-32b, in my own translation. Most of it is written in Aramaic. Some portions, which I have *italicized*, are in Hebrew. Biblical quotations are in **boldface**. For an alternative translation see van Bekkum (1992: 7-9).

the sun is in the east, all look at it; when the sun is in the west, all look at it; when the sun is in mid-sky, none looks at it.

And the sages say: both this and that are equal, as it is said: **For as the heaven is high above the earth… As far as the east is from the west**.[4] For if one of them were greater, we would write both as that which is greater! Now, when the sun is in mid-sky, why don't they look at it? Because it stands openly, with nothing to cover it.

(2) *He told them: "was the sky created first or the earth?" They said: "the sky was created first, as it is said:* **In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth**".[5]

(3) *He told them: "was light created first, or darkness?" They told him:* "this thing has no solution".

Now they might have told him: *darkness was created first, as it is written:* **And the Earth was without form, and void; and darkness…** and then **And God said: Let there be light! And there was light**.[6] They thought (they ought not to) lest he come to ask what lies above and what below, what before and what behind. But if so, they would not tell him about the sky either! They (must have) thought initially that he was asking a random, general question. Yet once they saw his later question, they thought – we shall not tell him, lest he ask what lies above and what below, what before and what behind.

(4) *He told them:*[7]

(4a) "Who is called wise?" They told him: *"who is wise? He who sees what is (being) born".*

(4b) *He told them:* "Who is called a hero?" *They told him: "he who conquers his desire".*

(4c) He told them: "who is called rich?" They told him: *"who is rich? He who is happy in his lot".*

(5) He told them:

(5a) "What shall a man do and live?" They told him: "kill himself".

(5b) "What shall a man do and die?" "Enliven himself".

(6) He told them: "what shall a man do and become acceptable to people?" They said: "let him hate kingship and government". He told them:

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[3] The Hebrew uses the root אמר throughout the colloquy, which I rendered "told", sacrificing style for literalness.

[4] *Psalms* 103:11-12 (KJV).

[5] *Genesis* 1:1.

[6] *Genesis* 1:2-3.

[7] The questions and answers grouped as 4a-c are ascribed to Ben-Zoma by *Mishnah Avot* 4.1. The grouping according to the salient suggestion of Wallach (1941: 50).

"mine is better than yours. Let him love kingship and government, and act kindly towards the sons of man".

(7) He told them: "is it better to dwell in the sea, or better to dwell on land?" They told him: "it is better to dwell on land, for all seafarers are ill at ease until they come up to land again."

(8) He told them: "who of you is the smartest?" They told him: "all as one are we equal. For every question which you posited – we solved together".

(9) He told them: "what reason (have you) for opposing us?" They told him: "Satan has won".

(10) He told them: "here I come to kill you by a royal decree!" They told him: "government (lies in) the hand of the king, and it is not fitting for a king to lie". Forthwith did he dress them in clothes of scarlet, and threw necklaces of gold around their necks.

He told them: "I want to go to the country of Africa." They told him: "you cannot go, for mountains of darkness divide (here from there)". He told them: "it won't go that I shan't go, and for this reason I ask you: what shall I do?" They told him: "fetch Libyan donkeys, who are distinguished in darkness, and bring coils of ropes, and tie (them) on this side; and when you come (on your way back) hold them, and come back to your place."

So he did, and he went and arriving in that town where all were women, he wanted to make battle against them. They told him: "if you kill us, they will say 'he has killed women'. If we kill you, they will say 'the king was killed by women!'"

He told them: "bring me bread". They brought him bread of gold on tables of gold. He told them: "what (kind of) people eat bread of gold?" They told him: "but if you wanted bread, was there not bread in your place to eat, that you betook yourself to come here?"

When he came to set out, he wrote on the gate of the town:

I, Alexander Macedon, had been a fool until I arrived at the African land of women, and took advice from women.

When he betook himself and came, he sat down at that spring; he was eating bread, and in his hand was a salted fish. While he was whitening them, a scent fell on them. He said: "learn from this – this spring comes from the Garden of Eden".

Now, some say, that he took some water and sprinkled it on his nose. Others say that he followed up the stream, until he reached the entrance to the Garden of Eden.

> He raised his voice: "Open the gate for me!" They told him: **This gate of Yhwh etc.**[8] He told them: "I am also a king I am! I deem myself important! Give me something!" They gave him a globular object.
> He came to weigh all of his gold and silver against it, and it did not weigh as much. He told the rabbis: "what is that?" They said: "this is an eyeball of flesh and blood, that is never satiated". He told them: "from what (do you deduce) that it is so?" (They told him): "take a speck of sand and cover it". (So he did) and it was immediately weighed. As it is written: **Hell and destruction are never full**.[9]

Before moving to the literary analysis of the text, a few methodological observations are in order. The first concerns the nature of the twain works in question: the *Talmud Bavli* and the *Alexander Romance*. Despite the very obvious differences between these two literary phenomena – one is a universal, multicultural adventure story; the other a particularly Jewish compendium of lore, legend and law – they nevertheless share a deep-rooted literary common ground. To begin, both works are composed of independent units, which can be, and indeed are, read and studied for their own sake, not necessarily as part of the whole. In addition, both share to some degree a sense of timelessness, with many events taking place in *Spatium Mythicum*. In other words, the happenstance and action reported by either text do not necessarily appear in chronological order, nor do they seem to follow any organized temporal scheme. These two literary corpora are thus well-equipped to communicate and negotiate with one another. It would be stating the obvious to add that any such communication and borrowing from one work to the other is hardly accidental. On the contrary, we may expect it to be motivated by the interests and predilections of the various authors, compilers and recensors.

The second observation regards the evolution of the Alexander story in tractate *Tamid*. Even a superficial reading of the text reveals its complex and layered composition, with multiplicity of language, speakers and sources of inspiration. Indeed, modern scholarship has tried to break the text down in the attempt to identify and date its various components.[10] Such attempts, relying on linguistic considerations, have certainly revealed some of the inherent complexities of our story. Yet it is good to bear in mind the limitations of linguistic argumentation. Late authors are perfectly capable of using archaizing language in order to make their texts look older, while editors and compilers may well rework the language of received texts, giving a new appearance to old material. And while a fresh inquiry into the language of the text (the Aramaic portions particularly) may yield interesting results, I leave that as a future endeavor. My intent in this paper is to analyze the text as it appears at the time of *Bavli Tamid*'s formation, in the 6th or 7th century CE, as a single coherent unit.[11]

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[8] *Psalms* 118: 20: This gate of Yhwh, into which the righteous shall enter.

[9] *Proverbs* 27:20: Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied. שאול ואבדון (hell and destruction) represent the netherworld.

[10] Lévi (1883: 78-84); Wallach (1941). Both scholars aimed to define the earliest stratum of the text and consequently turned their interpretations in that direction.

The first segment of the Alexander story in *Bavli Tamid* does not come from the *Romance* proper, but rather parallels the famous episode of Alexander's conference with the Gymnosophists, which appears also in the historical tradition of Alexander, and survives in three main sources: Papyrus Berlin 13044 (2nd or 1st BC); Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* 64 (c. 100 CE); and the *Metz Epitome* 78-84 (of uncertain date).[12] The agreement of these three tellings, in works which are otherwise manifestly different and independent, lends probability to the existence of a common source, possibly one (or more?) of the first-generation Alexander historians. At the risk of causing some confusion for students of Alexander *historicus*, I shall relate to the report of these three sources as the "vulgate version", VV for short.

A comparison of *Bavli Tamid* with the VV displays both close similarities and interesting differences. The obvious similarity is that the framework story is the same: Alexander confers with a group of ten sages who are somehow opposed to him, engaging them in a riddle contest. The sages manage to outsmart Alexander, who in turn respects their wisdom and cleverness, and makes his peace with them. The first and most obvious difference is the disengagement of the *Tamid* plot from its Indian context, and the replacement of the Gymnosophists with the Elders of the Negev. According to Plutarch and the *Metz Epitome*, the Indian Gymnosophists provided the ideological motivation for the policy of resistance practiced by the king of the Malloi – one of Alexander's fiercest enemies in the Indus valley. This armed conflict caused Alexander and his men grave difficulties and wasted innumerable lives, nearly costing Alexander his own. Since *Tamid* removes the Gymnosophists from the story, and does away with the Indian context altogether, the most pressing question becomes: Who are the Elders of the Negev?

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[11] Such an approach is warranted by the essential similitude of the three surviving manuscripts of *Bavli Tamid*: Florence 7 (1177 CE); Oxford 370 (14th cent. Ashkenaz); Vatican 120 (14th cent. Ashkenaz)

[12] Berlin Papyrus 13044: Wilcken (1923) = *FGrH* 153.9; English translation in Stoneman (1994: 76-77). See also a fragmentary version in Geneva Papyrus 271 (Willis and Maresch 1988). *Metz Epitome*: according to the Teubner edition of P.H. Thomas (1966). Yet another version appears in the *Romance* (3.6). For sources, discussion and bibliography concerning the encounter with the Gymnosophists see Stoneman (1995; 2008: 91-106).

The Hebrew word *negev* stands for a dry place. In relation to *Eretz-Israeli* geography it refers to the desert at the southern end of the land, and hence is generally used as a synonym for "south". Closer to the case at hand, in *Daniel* 11: 5-40 "Negev" stands for Ptolemaic Egypt. Given the fact that out story continues from the meeting with the Elders of the Negev to the land of Africa, Egypt seems a reasonable and likely identification.[13] A second issue which comes to the fore is that of identity. Are the Elders of the Negev Jewish? Although the text never makes this explicit statement, it casually has the Elders respond to Alexander's questions with verses from the *Torah* and wise dicta from the *Mishnah*. From the silence of the narrative voice on this score we may plausibly surmise that the author(s) thought the Jewishness of the Elders too obvious to require an explicit statement.[14]

The questions, too, differ between *Tamid* and the VV. Retaining the general framework story and even borrowing some questions and literary devices from its Greek source(s), the version of *Tamid* nevertheless offers new material, and a completely new arrangement.[15] Thus, Alexander's line of argument in *Tamid* opens with three cosmological questions, which are quite different from his opening questions in the VV. In terms of its own frame of reference, the cosmological issues correspond to the general interest of tractate *Tamid* in similar questions, with special attention given to the practical consequences of the answers for the everyday operation of the Jerusalem Temple. It may possibly be the reason why this Alexander story was assigned particularly to this place in tractate *Tamid*.[16] This kind of associative connection between highly different literary units is famously characteristic of rabbinic literary logic. Another aspect of this kind of logic appears in the discussion which follows the answer to the first question. Finding fault in the reply of the Elders to Alexander's first question, an anonymous editor offers a different answer, which he ascribes to "the sages", distinguishing them from the Elders of the Negev. The multilayered nature of the text appears clearly also in the editor's preference of Aramaic over Hebrew at this point.

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[13] Interestingly, when Alexander first reached the Indus river system, he thought that he had found the sources of the Nile (Nearchos in Strabo 15.1.25; Arrian 6.1.2-5). The movement of the story from India to Egypt thus demonstrates elasticity not only of time, but also of space.

[14] An interesting parallel to the situation described appears in the *Letter of Aristeas*, where a Hellenistic King of Egypt presents wisdom questions to decades of Jewish sages. See especially ch. 273, where the author apologizes for including 11 sages in each of the last two decades, the LXX being, according to the *Letter*, in fact 72.

[15] The same method of literary adaptation is applied also in the *Romance* (3.6). The relation of this telling to the VV and to the story in *Tamid* remains another issue which merits future attention.

[16] Suggested by Steinsaltz (2007: *ad loc.*).

The third question is also the first which has a clear parallel in the VV. In *Tamid* Alexander asks whether light was created first, or darkness. In the VV a strongly reminiscent question – which came first, Night or Day? – appears in fifth place. This parallel gives us an interesting insight into the correspondence between the two traditions. To begin, the terminology of the *Tamid* version has been adapted to fit *Genesis* 1:2-3. While the meaning of the question is essentially the same, the Jewish version uses terms which would relate exactly to the biblical authorities on which its answer relies. But if the question was made to fit the answer given by the biblical verse, how is it that the Elders of the Negev declared this question unanswerable? Looking at the parallel question 5 in VV (in all three tellings) we see that the Gymnosophists make a reply which Alexander finds puzzling. When he expresses his wonder at their response, the Indian philosophers smugly tell Alexander that difficult questions have difficult answers. This literary move is thus borrowed from the VV to *Tamid* but is used differently. And while we are left to guess at the intentions of the compiler of the original Jewish text, the secondary redactional layer, with which we are concerned here, gives a straight answer: the Elders of the Negev were afraid that if they continued to provide him with answers to his cosmological queries, Alexander would in turn continue to inquire about Creation and find out the secrets of Life, the Universe and Everything. According to *Tosefta Ĥagigah* 2.1 (predating *Bavli Tamid* by some centuries) the study of Creation was allowed only in solitude, and any public discussion thereof was forbidden altogether. The assumption of the redactional voice, which views Alexander as a potential discussant of such a lofty topic, may be understood as a compliment to his curiosity and mental capacities.

Having tested the waters with cosmology, Alexander moves in the next two questions to human subjects. The first of these, comprised of three sub-questions, is taken *verbatim* from the sayings of Ben-Zoma in *Mishnah Avot* 4.1. It defines wisdom as foresight, heroism as self-control, and affluence as self-contentment. The text in *Tamid* does not refer to *Avot* 4.1 explicitly (it leaves out the biblical verses and a fourth question), but the reference will not have been missed by the intended readership of the *Talmud*. Incidentally, it also implicitly assumes a familiarity of Alexander with Ben-Zoma’s words, or alternatively ascribes to him a similar line of thought.[17]

The fifth question is comprised of a doublet: “What shall a man do and live?” “Kill himself”; and “What shall a man do and die?” “Enliven himself”. These Zen-like dicta have no parallel in rabbinic literature, as far as I know. Rashi, the 11th century father of Talmudic exegesis, sensibly interprets “kill oneself” as the practice of humility, and “enliven oneself” as aspiration to greatness and haughtiness. At the end of this paper I shall try to demonstrate how this and the previous question are essential for the understanding of the entire narrative.

The sixth question looks back once again to the VV. Not only is the question – what shall a man do and become acceptable to people? – quite similar, it also appears in the same place in the ten-question scheme. Both in VV and in *Tamid* it is understood by both sides that “a man” refers to a king, and more specifically to Alexander. In VV the Gymnosophists reply that even at the height of power, a man should not become a source of terror for others. In *Tamid* the exchange is more complex. The reply by the Elders of the Negev is more extreme than that of the Gymnosophists: in order to become popular, “a man” should hate kingship and government altogether. On the Jewish side, this reply chimes well with a basic mistrust of human kingship evident already in *1 Samuel* 8; on Alexander’s it reminds one of the disdainful attitude displayed by Diogenes of Sinope (Plutarch, *Alexander* 24; *De Fortuna* 331F). Yet in *De Fortuna* Plutarch uses the Diogenes anecdote to make the opposite point: true philosophy will not allow a noble spirit to shun the life of political action.[18] The same is true for *Tamid*’s Alexander, who offers what he claims to be a better answer: let the ruler love kingship and government, and act kindly towards the sons of man. The text of *Tamid* thus departs considerably from the VV at this point. Not only is Alexander given an opportunity to present his own solution to this question of political philosophy, he is also accorded the last word, phrased in highly positive terms. *Bavli Tamid* can thus be seen to display a progressively positive attitude towards Alexander. Initially considered capable of discussing the mysteries of Creation (questions 1-3), he is then presented as intellectually involved with Jewish wisdom (question 4), and consequently accorded the final word in the current discussion. Yet the question remains: how is a monarch to attain benevolence? The answer lies in Alexander's conduct in the city of women (more on that presently), where he puts to good use the lesson learned from questions four and five, and in the conclusion of the meeting with the Elders, where he acts charitably towards them.

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[17] See also the rabbinic story of Alexander’s meeting with Gviha Ben-Psisa, where the Macedonian king presides over a court which uses the *Torah* as its ultimate source of authority (sources, translation and analysis in Amitay 2006).

[18] Cf. *Mishnah Avot* 3.2: “always pray for the sake of Kingship, for without the respect and fear which it commands, we should all swallow each other alive!” הווי מתפלל לשלומה של המלכות שאילולי מוראה איש את רעהו חיים בלענו.

The following question also derives from the VV, albeit in mutated form. Clearly, the question involves the difference between earth and sea, but the exact emphasis differs between our sources. In Papyrus Berlin 13044 (and in the *Romance* 3.6) the question is simply which is bigger, the earth or the sea. The (correct) answer is that the earth is bigger, as it contains the sea. The same answer is given by Plutarch and the *Metz Epitome*, but to a different question: which elements support bigger (or more kinds of) animal life. The question in *Tamid* is different: which of the two elements is the better domicile for humans. The departure from the VV, with its seemingly obvious answer (land is better, for seafarers are always afraid for their lives), may perhaps be seen as a forewarning, following up the positive impression given so far by the repartee: human achievements, however acute, are no substitute for humility.

The remainder of the questions in the *Tamid* version (numbered here 8-10) go back directly to the framework story of the VV, inspired as it is by the historical context. At the beginning of the encounter Alexander promises to kill the Gymnosophists, starting with him who would give the worst answer. The shrewdness of the Indian referee, who claims that each of his friends had answered worse than the next, involves Alexander in a Liar's Paradox, and serves to conclude the story without bloodshed. The approach of *Tamid*, on the other hand, does not conform to the narratological devices of the VV, and creates serious interpretative problems. To begin, giving nothing of the historical background and omitting to specify the conditions of the riddle contest, the transition of *Tamid* to the conclusion seems surprising and unwarranted. Secondly, instead of focusing on the *worst* answer, Alexander asks who was the *smartest* of the Elders. Thirdly, while in VV the Gymnosophists answer individually, allowing the referee the opportunity to rate their answers and thus find out the order of their execution, the Elders of the Negev reply: "all as one are we equal. For every question which you posited – *we solved together*". With the key conditions for the application of the Liar's Paradox thus removed, the reader is left to wonder about the culmination of the story. Alexander threatens to kill the Elders of the Negev, and they reply that "government (lies in) the hand of the king, and it is not fitting for a king to lie". But who lied to whom about what? The *Tamid* text does not say.

One possible solution for this difficulty would be to assume that the redactor of *Tamid* took for granted a familiarity of his audience with the VV. If so, it may be suggested that he changed the story in order to emphasize the sense of Jewish community and solidarity. The comparison of our story with the *Letter of Aristeas* – which celebrates the unanimity of opinion between the 72 sages and ends with the king giving gifts of scarlet and gold – may perhaps lend some support to this suggestion. Yet it is also possible that during the editorial evolution of the text sight was lost of the original story, giving rise to the problematic, truncated version we now possess.

Be that is it may, one last point still requires attention. In ninth place (that is, after he inquired who was the smartest of his interlocutors and before threatening to kill them) Alexander asks the Elders of the Negev why they came out against him. Their startling reply is: "Satan has won". Now, the question has a clear parallel in VV (4), where Alexander asks the Gymnosophists why they incited the local king to oppose him. Their answer is simple enough: they wanted the king either to live nobly or to die nobly. The king's name is a point of interest: Sabeilos in the Berlin Papyrus, Sabbas in Plutarch and Sambus in the *Metz Epitome*. The mild disagreement between the three sources which comprise the VV is understandable, given the problems with transliterating Indian names to Greek and Latin. It is probably not a coincidence that the Elders of the Negev should retain the basic alliteration. Nonetheless, such an argument is hardly sufficient to explain the use of such a laden word as "Satan". The uncertainty about the editorial process outlined above makes it difficult to interpret Satan's manifestation. Rashi explains it by expanding the dialogue in the following fashion: Alexander asks why the Elders of the Negev stand against him and do not fear him, knowing full well that he has the upper hand numerically; the Elders reply that his argument is insufficient, seeing as Satan often wins and confounds the choice made by men, which is also the case with Alexander. The problem with this explanation is that it reads into the text much that is not in it.

Following the conclusion of Alexander's discourse with the Elders of the Negev we reach the second part of our story. Leaving behind the storyline borrowed from Alexander's encounter with the Gymnosophists, *Tamid* continues with a number of episodes taken from the *Alexander Romance* proper. These episodes are all well known, and include the journey to the land of darkness (2.39), a visit to a city of women (3.25), the discovery of the water of life (2.39, 41) and finally an aborted ascension to Heaven.[19] These two distinct parts of the story are brought together by a geographical question. Africa is separated from the Negev by mountains of darkness. Alexander, who does not know how to cross them without losing his way, inquires whether the Elders of the Negev have any ideas. In the *Romance* the stratagem suggested by an old soldier is to take a hundred mares which had just given birth, leaving their foals behind. The mothers would surely be able to find the way back to their offspring, which indeed proves to be the case. In *Tamid* the Elders of the Negev tell Alexander to use Libyan asses (which have excellent night sight[20]), and to tie a rope at the beginning of the trek (as in the famous Labyrinth story).

The mountains of darkness play a complex role in the story. To begin, the problem and its solution by the Elders achieve a smooth transition from the part of the story which looks back to the Gymnosophists to the latter part, which consists of episodes familiar from the *Romance*. This artful sewing together of segments which were derived from different sources commands our appreciation for the literary aptitude of the author. Secondly, the mountains of darkness serve to distinguish not merely between two different geographical areas, but also between reality and myth. This point has been demonstrated admirably in the study of a different rabbinic legend of Alexander, where he crosses the mountains of darkness on his way to the land of Kaşia.[21] The meeting with the Elders of the Negev is, of course, non-factual. Yet nothing in the story concerning Alexander's meeting with them extends outside the realm of possibility. The mountains of darkness, on the other hand, have nothing to do with human experience, nor do the city of women and the spring of life. Thus, when Alexander crosses the mountains of darkness the story moves with him to a different plane, a myth within a myth. This transition also brings about a new phase for Alexander. In the meeting with the Elders of the Negev he stands in the shoes of the inquisitor. In the realm of wonder beyond the mountains of darkness it is he who is put to the test.

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[19] A full discussion of the *Tamid* stories vis-à-vis their tellings in the various versions of the *Romance* lies outside my scope here. As stated above, we ought to remember the basic premise that the inclusion of each literary unit in the *Tamid* story had a distinct purpose, and must be read as such.

[20] Implicit in the text, explicit in Rashi *ad loc.* Cf. Rashi on *Genesis* 49:14.

[21] For *loci* and analysis see the insightful article by Kossman (2003: esp. 82-83). The motif of the mountains of darkness, along with other similarities between the Kaşia story and *Tamid* (most notably the golden loaf of bread, more on which presently) justify the juxtaposition.

The first part of the challenge to be faced by Alexander regards his conduct in the land of women. His initial response is a desire to fight the women and conquer their city. The women, for their part, reply as do the Amazons in the *Romance* (3.25), that such a war would bring Alexander no benefit whatsoever: if he won, a victory over women would bring him no honor; if he lost, being defeated by women would reflect horribly on his reputation. Alexander decides to forego hostilities, and by so doing proves himself to be a wise man according to the answer received to question 4a: *who is wise? He who foresees what is about to happen*.

Next Alexander asks the women for some bread. They bring him a loaf of gold, which makes Alexander wonder: what kind of people eat gold? The women respond that surely gold is what Alexander really desires, for had he merely wanted bread, he could have stayed at home.[22] By so doing the women both accuse Alexander of avarice and rebuke him for it. The message corresponds with question 4c: *who is rich? He who is happy in his lot*. Had Alexander been content with the bread of his native country, there would have been no need for his arduous expedition. Alexander's response, represented by the inscription he erects at the city's gate – *I … had been a fool until I arrived at the… land of women and took advice from women* – expresses both his humility and his sense of humor. His heroism (4b) is also vindicated, considering that he contained himself from fighting the women, but also from molesting them sexually.[23] Passing the test at the city of women with flying colors, Alexander proceeds to face the second stage of his complex challenge, competing for the ultimate prize – immortality.

The last segment of the *Tamid* story brings Alexander to the spring of the water of life, and through it to the gates of Heaven. Frustratingly, this last episode, the dramatic climax of the *Tamid* Alexander story, is also the most truncated and elliptic of the entire narrative. Two features stand out in particular. First, there seem to be two versions as to how Alexander applied the water of life – some say that he sprinkled it on his nose while others claim that he followed the water upstream. Second, following the encounter at the gates of Heaven a group of rabbis suddenly comes into view; and while the modern reader is taken aback by their unexpected appearance, their presence is taken for granted both by Alexander and by the storyteller. Once again, it is hard to discern whether the condition of the text is due to the storyteller's assumption of its familiarity to the audience, or to a deterioration of a once-fuller version. Be that as it may, *Tamid* clearly follows the story of the Greek *Romance* (2.39-41) in its basic details: a salted fish is washed in a spring containing the water of life; Alexander ascends to Heaven; he is rebuked by a supernatural being and consequently returns to earth. The keys to understanding the Gate of Heaven episode lie in the differences between the *Romance* and *Tamid* and in the context of the biblical verse cited by the gatekeeper.

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[22] This reply is strongly reminiscent of the retort ascribed to Dandamis, another Indian philosopher queried by Alexander, who, according to some authorities, limited his communication with Alexander to a single question: "for what reason has Alexander made such a (long) way hither?" (Plutarch, *Alexander* 65.4, just after the Gymnosophists story).

[23] For a very different approach to Alexander's meeting with Amazons and his relation to their sexuality see Diodorus 17.77.1-3; Curtius 6.5.24-32; Justin 12.3.5-7, with Baynham (2001) and Amitay (2010: 78-86). One imagines that if the redactors of *Tamid* were familiar with the story (it is alluded to, though not told, in Plutarch *Alexander* 46), they should hardly approve.

In both narratives, the miracle of the fish serves to inform Alexander about the special quality of the water of life.[24] However, in the *Romance* this information is discovered by Alexander's cook, Andreas, and is kept a secret. Only later, when the spring had been left behind, does Andreas disclose his secret to Alexander, who is consumed by grief at the missed opportunity to gain immortality. In *Tamid*, on the other hand, it is Alexander who handles the fish and discovers the secret of the water of life. Unlike the *Romance*, where Alexander is failed by a henchman, in *Tamid* he is given a fair opportunity to vie for immortality. The outcome of the story would not be decided by others, but by Alexander himself! And while in the *Romance* Alexander decides on an ascension to Heaven without a direct causal relation to the fish episode, in *Tamid* the ascension is a direct result of the discovery of the water of life.

It is against this background that we ought to read the bit of verse quoted by the gatekeeper in retort to Alexander's request to be admitted to Heaven. Now, it is common practice in rabbinic literature – and the *Bavli* is no exception – to cite only as much of a verse as is needed in order to recognize its context. It is tacitly assumed that the audience should be familiar enough with the Bible to realize the context and supply the relevant verses. The opening of the verse in question – "this gate of Yhwh…" – comes from *Psalms* 118:20. In order to appreciate the context it would be beneficial to go back to 118:17, and to quote the passage in full:

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[24] For the water of life in Islamic tradition and a possible answer as to why the fish is said to be "whitened" by the water, see Casari (2006: 227-228; 2011). More on the fish motif and its connection with the ascension to heaven in Abdullaeva (2009/10).

> [**17**] I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of Yhwh. [**18**] Yhwh hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death. [**19**] Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise Yhwh: [**20**] *This gate of Yhwh, into which the righteous shall enter.*

Now, in *Tamid* Alexander demands, rather aggressively: "open the gate for me!" Given that the story revolves here around the possibility of gaining immortality, may we not read into Alexander's demand also the content of verses 17-19? The reply of the gatekeeper, essentially negative, indicates that Alexander's credentials regarding righteousness are somehow less than sufficient. It is exactly at this point that Alexander is put to the final test, going back to the fifth question he had posed to the Elders of the Negev: "What shall a man do and live? Kill himself. What shall a man do and die? Enliven himself". The good advice of the Elders of the Negev provides the correct answer: in order to gain immortality (enliven himself), Alexander has to display his humility (kill himself). Disregarding the Elders' wisdom at the very threshold, Alexander gives a haughty reply – "I am also a king I am! I deem myself important!" – and thus fails the test miserably. As indicated by the second part of question five, by wishing to enliven himself he is given over to death.

Coming back to earth with the gift of a globe, Alexander realizes (with help from the mysterious rabbis) that the gift given him is really a human eye, symbolizing human avarice and a perpetual lack of satisfaction. Putting it in the balance, he learns that it can never be satiated, except by obliterating all things desired from sight. The story ends with a quotation from *Proverbs* 27:20 – *Hell and destruction are never full*; the second part of the verse, to be supplied by the knowledgeable audience, is: *so the eyes of man are never satisfied*. The dirt used to cover the magical eyeball stands for the earth which would cover Alexander's mortal body.

At the end of the day, Alexander, for all his good qualities, fails in the last test. Where humility means immortality, he cannot forego his natural Heroic hybris. The *Tamid* story, which begins as a semi-historical narrative and continues as a part of the *Romance* thus ends as a tragedy. This shift of genre, and the end it spells for Alexander, are rather surprising. Despite the antagonistic departure point of the plotline, Alexander appears for the most part as a positive figure. He is capable of engaging the Elders of the Negev intellectually, and at one crucial point his answer is even better than theirs.

Any animosity is eventually dispelled by his admiration for their wisdom and cleverness. At the city of women he behaves blamelessly. How are we to explain, then, the unhappy *katastrophē*?

This difficulty is mirrored and anticipated by the ninth question in Alexander's colloquy with the Elders of the Negev. Just as Alexander wondered why the Elders chose to oppose him, the readers may imagine him perplexed by his gloomy lot at the end of the story. As we have seen, the answer to the ninth question – Satan has won – poses a serious exegetical challenge. I should like to suggest here an alternative explanation, which is no less speculative than that offered by Rashi, but may hopefully help us understand the *Tamid* story in a wider context.

Of Alexander's various appearances in the *Bavli*, the one which best corresponds with *Tamid* is the story in *Yoma* 69a, about his conference with Simon the Just.[25] To begin, the *Yoma* story is actually alluded to – in the Internet age we might say "hyperlinked" – earlier in tractate *Tamid* (27b). Anyone reading through the tractate was bound to have the *Yoma* episode in mind shortly before encountering the Elders of the Negev.[26] Secondly, on a very basic level the two episodes share a common plotline, which begins with a state of hostility (real or imagined) between Alexander and the Jews, then revolves unexpectedly from opposition to amiability. Certainly, both stories involve the establishment of a practicable *modus vivendi* between the two parties. Thirdly, in either case the story addresses the thorny question of the relation between mortality and immortality, between humanity and the Divine. In *Tamid*, the issue is raised explicitly at the latter part of the story. In *Yoma* it is expressed more subtly by using the motif of *proskynesis*.[27] Alexander *historicus*, as is well known, attempted during his Baktrian campaign to introduce the practice of prostration as part of his own court protocol. The ancient sources are unanimous in interpreting this as a demand that his subjects (both Greek and Persian) recognize his divine status. The *Yoma* story consciously plays on the same theme to achieve the opposite effect:

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[25] This story shows some interesting parallels, but also some major points of disagreement, with the famous story of Josephus (*Antiquities* 11.304-345). For bibliography and discussion see Amitay (2007: 237-240).

[26] According to Arazi (2006) in an earlier edition of *Bavli Tamid* the *Yoma* story and the *Tamid* story were given side by side, strongly supporting my suggested interpretation.

[27] For *proskynesis* in the Alexander histories see Curtius 8.5.5-24; Plutarch, *Alexander* 54; Arrian, *Anabasis* 4.10.5-12.5; Justinus 12.7.1-3. For parallels in other tellings of the meeting between Alexander and the Jerusalem High-Priest see Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.331-335; *Romance* ε 20; γ 2.23-24.

Alexander spontaneously prostrates himself before the Jewish High-Priest, thus establishing proper deference to the God of Israel.[28]

Through the juxtaposition of *Tamid* and *Yoma* we may reach a new understanding of the Elders' answer to the ninth question. In the *Yoma* story, it is God who wins, as Alexander's self-prostration before Simon the Just clearly demonstrates. In *Tamid* we are faced with an alternative story, in which the Elders of the Negev, who are manifestly Jewish, are once again opposed to Alexander. With *Yoma* in mind, we may read Alexander's question as directed to the reader: if Alexander has already shown his benevolence to the Jews a few pages before, why do we find him again in opposition here? The answer to this hypothetical question would be: because in this alternative story, it is not God, but rather Satan who has won. Satan's victory, according to this interpretation, dictates also Alexander's ultimate failure to gain entrance to Heaven.

To conclude: the Alexander story in *Tamid* presents a complex picture. In accordance with other appearances of the Macedonian in rabbinic literature, Alexander is presented in a positive light, as a foreign ruler who does well by the Jews. Yet this story also displays another side of Alexander, characterized by a hubristic desire for super-human status, which the rabbinic world view finds strongly reprehensible. The *Tamid* Alexander story thus serves a double purpose. On the one hand, it acts to balance out other positive stories of Alexander, and serves as a warning that even this illustrious king had his darker sides. On the other, it serves to define Alexander's theologically challenging persona as a proper and kosher topic for lovers of wisdom, a verdict generally maintained to this very day by rabbinic Judaism.

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[28] This point is emphasized further in Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.333, where Alexander states openly that he bowed down not before the High-Priest but rather before the God he represented. Even more so in the Parma Ms of *Megillat Ta'anit* on Kislev 21st (Noam 2003: 100-103, 262-265), where Alexander's perplexed followers ask him: "To this man do you prostrate yourself? Why, he is nothing but a son of man!" This text of *Megillat Ta'anit* – yet another product of Babylonian rabbinic Judaism – thus shares the basic assumption of the Greek and Latin authors: *proskynesis* is due only to the Divine.

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Part 5

Images

The Impact of Alexander the Great in the Art of Central Asia

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The impact of Alexander's conquest of Asia was both profound and long-lasting. The art and architecture of what was once the Achaemenid Empire were transformed in various ways, leading to new, multicultural mixtures. We must bear in mind that when Alexander crossed the Aegean there was little in the arts of his homeland that could be properly described as Macedonian. The Macedonians were primarily bearers of Greek art and culture. Their own visual culture was enriched as a result of Alexander's conquests. The excavations in Macedonia have revealed an influx of Oriental elements in Macedonian painting and luxury items after Alexander's death.[1] For example, the gold and ivory couches found in Macedonian tombs[2] recall the golden throne that Alexander was said to have sat on in the garden of the palace in Babylon (Ath. 12,537d = Ephippus, *FGrHist* 126.4); the bear hunt painted in the hunting frieze on the façade of Tomb II at Vergina (Aigai) could only have taken place in Asia because bears were sacred in the Greek world;[3] and the Macedonian elite began to portray themselves at banquets drinking out of Achaemenid-style rhyta.[4]

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[1] Cf. Palagia 2011.

[2] See, for example the gold and ivory couch from the Tomb of the Palmettes in Lefkadia, now in the Athens National Museum, dated ca. 320-300 B.C.: Rhomiopoulou and Schmidt-Dounas 2010, 87-93, pls. 14-33.

[3] For an Asian setting of the bear hunt, see Borza and Palagia 2007, 99, col. pl. 7. For a suggestion that the bear hunt is situated in Thrace, see Ignatiadou 2010, 122-124 with earlier references. That the bear hunt is located in Macedonia is advocated by Saatsoglou-Paliadeli 2004, 84-86.

[4] Compare the deceased holding an Achaemenid-style rhyton in the banquet frieze painted on the façade of the Tomb of Agios Athanasios: Tsimbidou-Avloniti 2005, pls. 33a and 34b.

The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East, 369–382

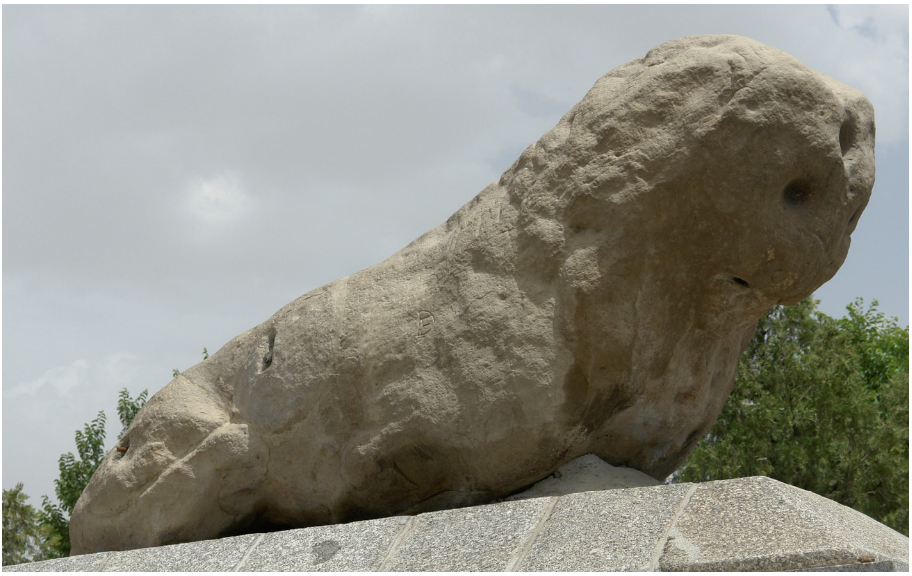

Figure 1. Stone lion. Hamadan (Ecabatana). Photo: Guntram and Heidermarie Koch.

For over three centuries after Alexander's death in Babylon in 323 B.C., Greek art and culture flourished in Egypt, the Near East and Central Asia even in the courts of non-Greek rulers like the Parthians, the Kushan and the Indians to name but a few.[5] In this brief survey I will show a selection of examples in order to illustrate the diffusion of motifs, tracing the threads leading from Macedon to the Near East and hence to Central Asia. Most of my discussion will revolve around Alexander for it was he who not only introduced fresh Macedonian themes but also inspired new art works in the regions of his vast empire for many centuries to come.

We begin with Alexander's campaign. One of the first vestiges of his passage through Persia is a colossal stone lion found in Ecbatana (Fig. 1). Its form is purely Greek, comparable to scores of life-size marble lions employed as grave markers in Athens and Attica throughout the fourth century B.C. (Fig. 2).[6] The lion of Ecbatana differs only on account of its large scale, which points to a monument honouring an exceptional individual. Because Hephaistion died in Ecbatana in 324, the lion is generally thought to have been set up by Alexander as a memorial to his friend.[7] But Hephaistion was

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[5] Cf. Boardman 1994, 75-181. For Central Asia, see Hansen et al. 2009.

[6] Woysch-Méautis 1982, 73-77, pls. 59-60, nos. 352-357. Lion, Fig. 2: Athens, National Museum 3868: Kaltsas 2002, no. 330.

[7] Lane Fox 1973, 434-435, fig. 26; Heckel 1992, 90 n. 150.

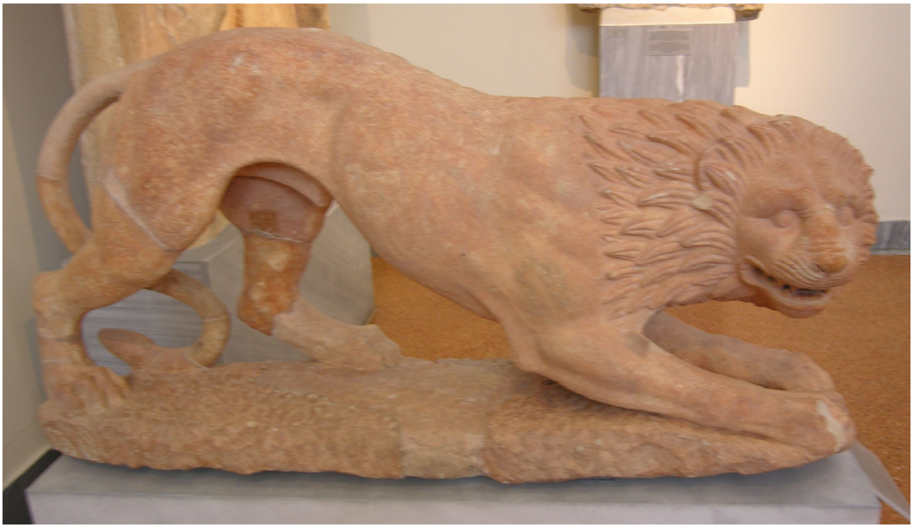

Figure 2. Funerary marble lion from Attica. Athens, National Museum 3868. Photo: Olga Palagia.

not buried in Ecbatana and the lion makes sense only as a grave marker. We know of one prominent Macedonian who was buried in Ecbatana, and that is Parmenio. He was in charge of Alexander's treasury in Media but Alexander had him killed after executing his son Philotas in 330 (Curt. 7,2,22-32; D.S. 17,80,3-4; Arr. 3,26,3-4; Plu. *Alex.* 49,13; Justin 12,5,3-4).[8] Parmenio's murder did not go down well with his army and they obtained permission to bury his body with military honours. The lion may well be the grave marker of Parmenio, thus dating from the early years of the campaign.

Towards the end of Alexander's life a series of commemorative silver coins or medallions were struck to celebrate his defeat of the Indian Porus at the Hydaspes River in 326.[9] They are known as the Porus or elephant medallions and the reverse represents the only certain lifetime image of Alexander that has come down to us. I illustrate two different examples because these coins are inexpertly struck by a mint on the move and each is missing elements of Alexander's image (Figs. 3-4).[10] Alexander is shown erect, frontal but for his head turned to his proper right. He is crowned by Victory and

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[8] Heckel 1992, 23 n. 64; Bosworth 1993, 102-103; Lindsay Adams 2003 with earlier references.

[9] Holt 2003, esp. 117-124 for a description; Dahmen 2007, 109-111.

[10] Mobile mint: Holt 2003, 147; Dahmen 2007, 110.

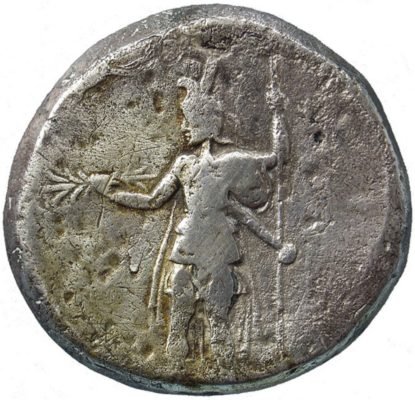

Figure 3. Silver decadrachm, “Porus medallion”. New York, American Numismatic Society 1959.24.86.

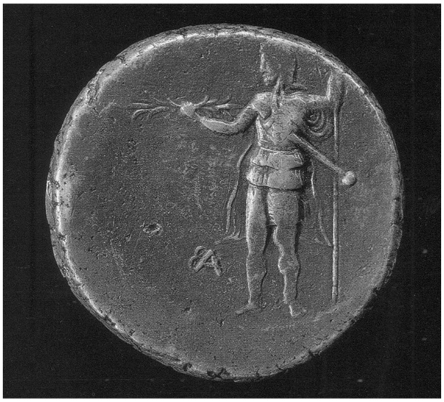

Figure 4. Silver decadrachm, “Porus medallion”. London, British Museum 1887,0609.1. Photo courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

holds Zeus’ thunderbolt in his right hand and a sceptre in his left (to judge by the floral finial). These attributes apart, his military gear is further documented by the Alexander mosaic from Pompeii (Fig. 5), which is generally thought to copy a battle piece commissioned by Cassander,[11] and by the arms and armour excavated in Tomb II at Vergina (figs. 6-8). His plumed Phrygian-type helmet is reminiscent of the iron helmet from Tomb II (Fig. 6).[12] The helmet Alexander wore at the battle of Gaugamela is described by Plutarch (*Alex.* 32,9) as of polished iron, created by the craftsman Theophilus. The Vergina helmet has been attributed to Alexander himself by Eugene Borza, who has argued, rather convincingly, that the arms and armour from the main chamber of Tomb II originally belonged to Alexander and were inherited by his half-brother Philip III Arrhidaeus, who is likely buried in the tomb.[13]

If we look carefully at Alexander’s helmet on the Porus medallions (Figs. 3-4), we observe that it has an overlong neck-guard extending over his left shoulder. In addition, an unidentified strip of something hangs down from the side of the helmet over his chest. I would like to suggest that both of these are strands of hair, indicating that sometime after 326 Alexander wore his hair long, perhaps in imitation of Achilles, thus adding another heroic feature to his public image.[14] This long-haired Alexander has left further traces in Central Asia as we will see shortly.

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[11] Naples, Museo Nazionale 10020. Dating from the second century B.C. Cohen 1997; Palagia 2011, 478 with n. 5 (with earlier references).

[12] Andronicos 1984, 144, figs. 97-98.

[13] Borza and Palagia 2007, 111-113, fig. 16. For the alternative view that Tomb II housed the remains of Philip II, promoted by Andronikos and his followers, see now Hatzopoulos 2008.

Alexander's military cloak, clasped over the right shoulder on the Porus medallions is duplicated on the Alexander mosaic (Fig. 5); his articulated corselet with wide lapels over the shoulders can be found both on the Alexander mosaic and the corselet from Vergina Tomb II (Fig.7); the long sword with a round-tipped scabbard hanging from a shoulder-strap at his left side is similar to the sword from Tomb II (Fig. 8).[15] Alexander's legs and feet are not well preserved on the extant specimens of the medallions, it is therefore impossible to assess whether he wore boots (as he does in the hunting frieze on the façade of Tomb II[16]) or was shown bare-footed.

Bearing in mind Alexander's image as he chose to have himself represented in the last years of his life, we now turn to a golden clasp (Fig. 9) excavated in one of the Yueh-chi or proto-Kushan graves of the first century A.D. at Tillya Tepe, which is situated in the territory of Bactria in northern Afghanistan.[17] The exact date of the clasp is unknown; it may well have been a Hellenistic heirloom from the second or first century B.C. It was manufactured in Central Asia but the iconography was inspired by Macedonian prototypes. The two clasp plaques show mirror images of a warrior holding a sceptre

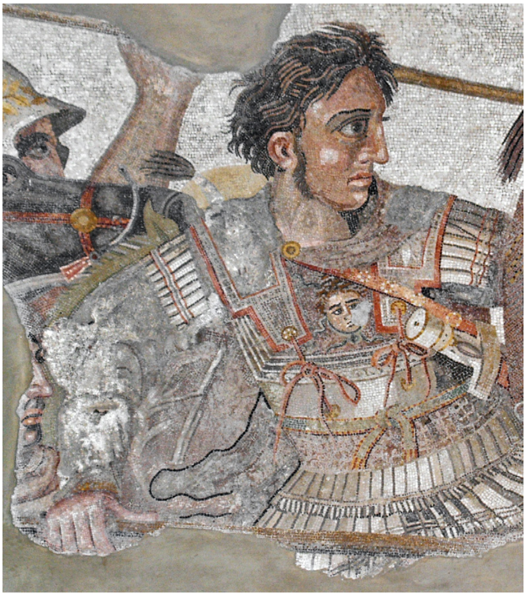

Figure 5. Alexander mosaic. Detail. Naples, Museo Nazionale 10020. Photo: Hans R. Goette.

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[14] That Alexander had long hair in imitation of Achilles is also suggested by Arrian 7,14,4.

[15] Cuirass and sword from Vergina Tomb II: Andronicos 1984, 140-145, figs. 95-96,99-100.

[16] Borza and Palagia 2007, 93, col. pl. 6.

[17] Kabul, National Museum 04.40.245. From Tomb III. Sarianidi 1985, 29-31, cat. no. 3.1, figs. 81-84; Boardman 2003, 354-357; Jarrige and Cambon 2007, cat. no. 79; Hiebert and Cambon 2011, 254-255, cat. no. 160.

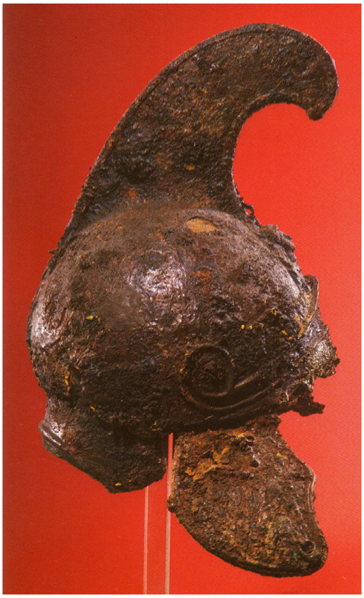


Figure 6. Iron helmet from Vergina, Tomb II. Vergina, Museum of the Royal Tombs. After Andronicos 1984, fig. 97.

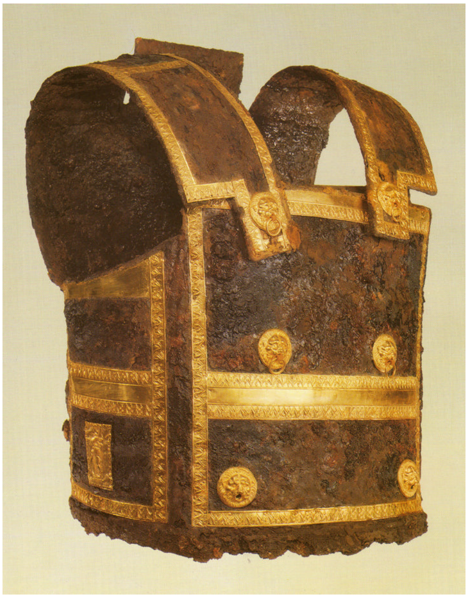
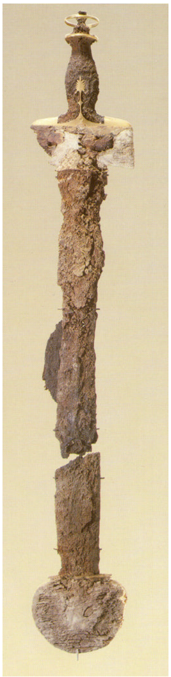


Figure 7. Corselet from Vergina, Tomb II. Vergina, Museum of the Royal Tombs. After Andronicos 1984, fig. 96.



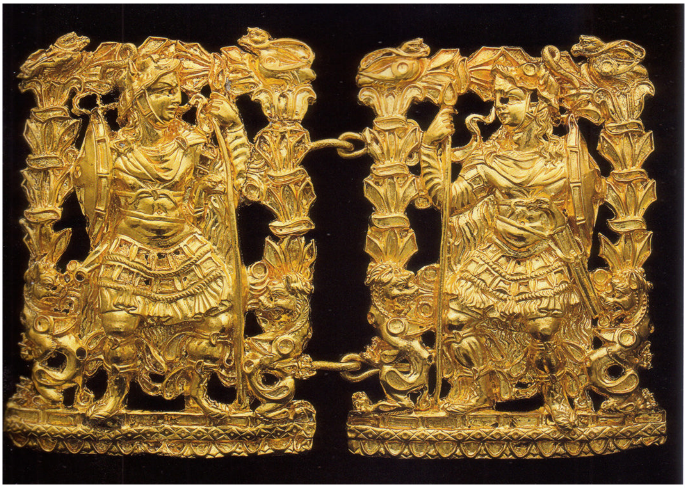


Figure 8 (left). Sword from Vergina, Tomb II. Vergina, Museum of the Royal Tombs. After Andronicos 1984, fig. 99.

Figure 9 (above). Golden clasp from Tillya Tepe, Tomb III. Kabul, National Museum 04.40.245. Photo after Jarrige and Cambon 2007, cat. no. 79.

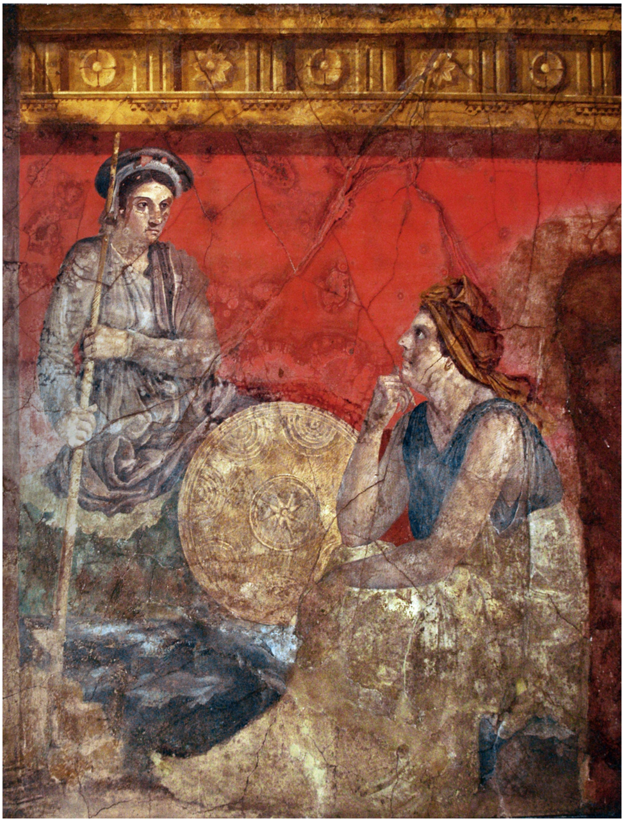


Figure 10. Wall-painting from the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor, Boscoreale. Naples, Museo Nazionale 906. Photo: Hans R. Goette.

with a floral finial and a shield decorated with a star, reminiscent of the star that decorated Macedonian shields and coin devices (Fig. 10).[18] The warrior has been variously described as the Persian god Veretragna, an Amazon or a Hellenistic warrior reminiscent of Alexander. He wears Alexander's corselet and military cloak as seen on the Alexander mosaic (Fig. 5) and the Porus medallions (Figs. 3-4) except that his cloak is here lined with fur.[19] He also wears a long-sleeved chiton and leather boots, their laces tied around his lower legs. Alexander is shown wearing a long-sleeved Persian-style chiton on both the Alexander mosaic (Fig. 5) and the Alexander sarcophagus from the royal cemetery of Sidon.[20] The Tillya Tepe warrior's sword has an eagle-head hilt, a shape familiar from Macedonian funerary paintings like the second-century Tomb of Lyson and Kallikles at Leukadia and from the bronze statue of an

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[18] For the Macedonian star, see Liampi 1998; Palagia forthcoming. For the wall-painting from Boscoreale, see below, n. 37.

[19] Compare the hunter wearing a bear skin on the hunting frieze of Tomb II at Vergina: Borza and Palagia 2007, 99-100, fig. 10; Ignatiadou 2010, 124, fig. 5.

[20] Alexander sarcophagus: Istanbul, Archaeological Museum 370: Stewart 1993, figs. 103, 106. On Alexander's Persian chiton, see below, p. 380.

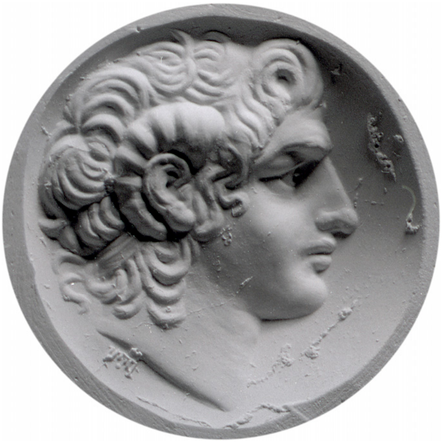

Figure 11. Impression of tourmaline intaglio. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 1892. 1499. Photo courtesy of the Beazley Archive, Oxford.

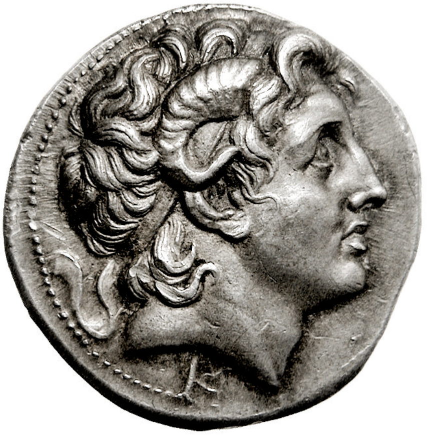

Figure 12. Silver tetradrachm of Lysimachus. New York, American Numismatic Society 1966.75.101.

Epirote general at Dodona, dated ca. 200 B.C.[21] His flat helmet is a metallic version of the petasos with wavy brim. It carries a twisted crest, as well as inlaid bull's ears and horns on the crown similar to the bull's ears and horns (suggesting assimilation to Dionysus) of Alexander's helmet on the obverse of a silver tetradrachm minted by Seleucus I (312-281).[22] A wide ribbon hanging from the helmet of the Tillya Tepe warrior must be the end of a royal diadem. His wide-eyed profile with the straight nose retains memories of Alexander (Fig. 5) and, more to the point, he has long locks of hair falling on his shoulders like Alexander on the Porus medallions. The implication here, I think, is that the warrior on the clasp is meant to be Alexander, based on an image created late in his lifetime, being probably contemporary with the Porus medallions.

That Alexander's image was re-created and circulated in Central Asia is suggested by a tourmaline intaglio in Oxford showing Alexander's head with the ram's horn of Ammon, wearing a royal diadem (Fig. 11).[23] Tourmaline was rarely used for gems but can be found in Afghanistan. The gem carries a monogram in Karoshti or Brahmi, datable to the third or second century

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[21] Tomb of Lyson and Kallikles: Miller 1993, 54-55, pl. 9a-b; col. pl. IIIa-b. Bronze sword with eagle-shaped hilt, Ioannina Museum 1373: Katsikoudis 2005, 103-107, 151, no. X27, pls. 22-23.

[22] Houghton and Lorber 2002, 77-78, pl. 11, nos. 195-196; Cribb 2007, 338, 343, fig. 9.

[23] Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 1892.1499. Bought in Beirut. Boardman and Vollenweider 1978, 76-78, no. 280 (tentatively dated to the lifetime of Alexander).

B.C., under Alexander's neck. The intaglio is usually thought to have been made in the East in Alexander's lifetime or soon after his death and inscribed at a later date. According to Ephippus (Ath. 537e = *FGrHist* 126.5), towards the end of his life, Alexander occasionally appeared at dinner-parties with Ammon's horns. However, so far as we know, Alexander did not have himself portrayed as Ammon. Ptolemy I was the first to show Alexander on his coins with elephant scalp, royal diadem and Ammon's horn, thus combining the symbols of his royalty, his divine descent and the conquest of India (Fig. 15).[24] The image of Alexander with royal diadem and Ammon's horns was introduced in the early third century by Lysimachus, who used it on the obverse of his silver coins promoting Alexander as universal ruler of divine descent (Fig. 12).[25] Lysimachus' coin type may well have served as the prototype of the gem now in Oxford (Fig. 11). Alexander's softened features and stylized hair on the gem indicate an eastern origin, Bactria or India, several generations after his death.

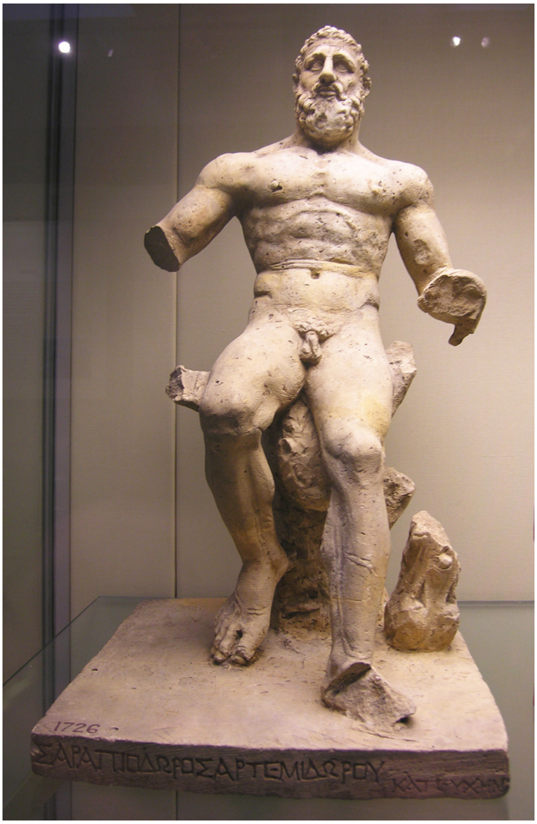

Figure 13. Limestone statuette of Herakles Epitrapezios from Nineveh. London, British Museum GR 1881.7-1.1. Photo: Olga Palagia.

The Greek kingdom of Bactria, which flourished from the mid third to the last quarter of the second century B.C. was one of the wealthiest Successor kingdoms despite its remote location on the fringes of the Greek world.[26] It was originally one of the satrapies of the Seleucid empire until Diodotus I seceded from the rule of Antiochus II creating his own realm in the 240s. The origins of the Diodotids are obscure, whereas the origin of the next dynasty, started by Euthydemus, was Magnesia according to Polybius (11,39,1). Nevertheless, the kings of Bactria did not sever their cultural connections with Macedon or with their Seleucid predecessors. Aï Khanum, one of the major cities of Bactria, boasted a Greek theatre which was modelled on that of Babylon, the only other Greek theatre in Central Asia apart from that of Seleucia on the Tigris.[27] All three theatres were built of mud brick; those of Babylon and Aï Khanum included special loggias for the king and his court, perhaps not only for display but also for their protection. The theatre in Babylon may go back to the days of Alexander though most scholars attribute it to Seleucus I. Alexander certainly organized performances of Greek drama during his stay in Ecbatana in 324 just before his return to Babylon, having sent for actors and other performers from Greece; they eventually performed at his own funeral games in Babylon in 323 (Arr. 7,14,10; Plu. *Alex.* 72,1). The Greek theatre in Babylon continued in use until the Roman empire. A second century A.D. inscription records repairs to the theatre and its stage by Dioscurides. In addition to dramatic performances, the theatres in Central Asia may have been used for political or dynastic gatherings like the theatre in Vergina. It too, has no stone remains and it has been suggested that it was made of perishable materials, probably wood.[28]

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[24] Davis and Kraay 1973, figs. 7-8; Dahmen 2007, 112-115; Cribb 2007, 337, fig. 7.

[25] Cribb 2007, 337, fig. 8; Dahmen 2007, 119-120.

[26] On the Bactrian kingdom, see Holt 1999.

Alexander commissioned from his favourite artist, Lysippus, a bronze table ornament in the guise of Herakles, ancestor of his royal line, which became known as Herakles Epitrapezios.[29] The hero was shown seated on a rock, holding a kantharos in his right hand and resting his left on his club. This was carried along in Alexander's campaign and was still remembered in Asia in the Roman period, when a limestone copy, signed by the sculptor Diogenes, was dedicated by Sarapiodorus son of Artemidorus (Fig. 13).[30] The statuette was found in the ruins of the palace of Nineveh. A variant of Lysippus' Herakles minus the kantharus, right hand resting on his club, was introduced as a coin type by Antiochus II (261-246) in the mid third century.[31] This coin type had an extraordinary success, as it was simultaneously adopted, with slight variations, at the end of the second century, by Hel-

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[27] Theatre in Aï Khanum: Bernard 1978, 429-441; Bernard 2009, 44-45. Theatre in Babylon: Wetzel et al. 1994, 3-22, 49; Klengel-Brandt 1997, 131, fig. 8. Theatre in Seleucia on the Tigris: Leriche n.d. 105, fig. 23; Messina 2007, 111.

[28] Andronicos 1984, 46-49.

[29] Moreno 1995, 140-147, no. 4.17.

[30] London, British Museum GR 1881.7-1.1: Hansen et al. 2009, 331, cat. no. 206.

[31] Houghton and Lorber 2002, 168, 179-180, 182, pls. 23-25, nos. 497, 500-501, 503-505, 509-512.

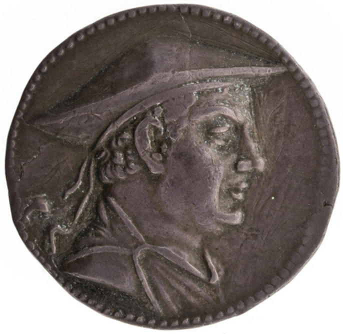

Figure 14. Silver tetradrachm of Antimachus I. New York, American Numismatic Society 1954.11.1.

lenistic rulers as far apart geographically as Nabis (207-192) of Sparta and Euthedemus I of Bactria.[32]

The kings of Bactria not only adopted Seleucid coin reverses (like the seated Herakles) but went so far as to advertise themselves as Macedonians by portraying themselves wearing the Macedonian kausia and diadem, a royal headgear introduced by Alexander (Ath. 12. 537e = Ephippus, *FGrHist* 126.5; Arr. 7,22,2). The kausia was the Macedonian elite hat, familiar to us from Macedonian funerary paintings of the early Hellenistic period[33] and from a handful of Hellenistic representations of the Diadochi. Seleucus II (246-226) portrayed himself bearded, wearing a kausia and diadem on the obverse of his bronze coins minted in Susa to advertise his Parthian campaign of 228.[34] The bronze portrait of a Macedonian king, perhaps Philip V, that came out of the sea near Kalymnos, wears the kausia and diadem,[35] so we know it was still current in the late third and early second century. Antimachus I of Bactria (Fig. 14) wears a kausia and royal diadem on his silver coins in the second quarter of the second century and so does Demetrius II on his seals in the last quarter of the same century just before the collapse of the kingdom of Bactria.[36] No other Macedonian kings or Successors are shown wearing kausias in their coin portraits. But we may possess a Roman copy of a painting of Alexander in kausia and diadem. One of the painted panels from the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor in Boscoreale (Fig. 10) of the first century B.C. represents a Macedonian king sitting next to a Macedonian shield, and

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[32] Nabis: Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, pl. 6, group IX, no. 17; Palagia 2006, 214, fig. 10. Euthydemus I: Mørkholm 1991, 121, pl. 25, nos. 383-386; Holt 1999, 131, pls. 24-25; Palagia 2006, 215, fig. 13.

[33] Cf. Wall-paintings on the façade of theTomb of Agios Athanasios: Tsimbidou-Avloniti 2005, pls. 31, 35-39. On the kausia with diadem, see Palagia forthcoming.

[34] Houghton and Lorber 2002, 233, 279, 281, nos. 797-798, pl. 84.

[35] Kalymnos Museum: Tzalas 2007, 362, fig. 37.

[36] Antimachus I: Davis and Kraay 1973, figs. 140, 143; Cribb 2007, 340, fig. 23. Demetrius II with long beard and kausia on a clay sealing from Seleucia on the Tigris, Torino, Museo Civico d’ Arte Antica S7-4058: Messina 2007, 50, cat. no. 26.

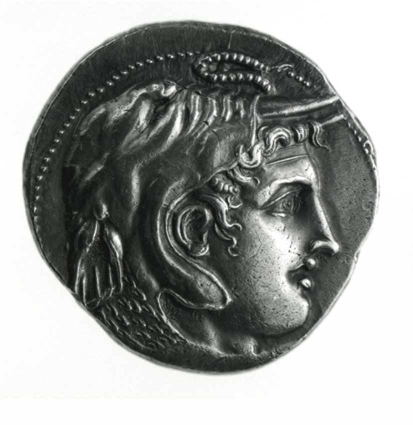

Figure 15. Silver tetradrachm of Ptolemy I. London, British Museum 1987,0649.508. Photo courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

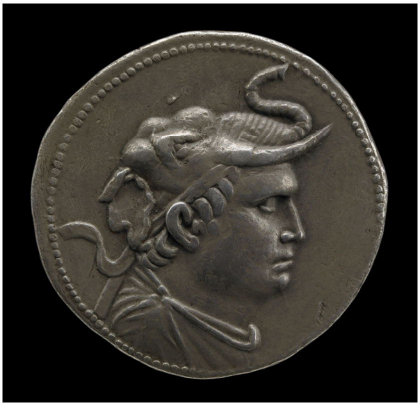

Figure 16. Silver tetradrachm of Demetrius I of Bactria. London, British Museum 1870,0701,1. Photo courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

wearing a kausia *diadematophoros* and a Persian long-sleeved chiton, which Alexander was known to have favoured from 330 onwards (Athen. 12.537e = Ephippus *FGrHist* 126.5; Curt. 6,6,4; D.S. 17,77,5; Arr. 4,7,4 and 4,9,9; Plu. *Alex.* 45,1; Justin 12,3,8).[37] This figure has been tentatively identified with Alexander the Great.[38] It may well be that the Bactrian rulers adopted the kausia in order to emphasize their connection to Alexander. In the beginning of the second century Demetrius I (Fig. 16) went so far as to portray himself in elephant scalp, inspired by the Ptolemaic coin portrait of Alexander as conqueror of India (Fig. 15) in order to advertise his own Indian campaign.[39]

In sum, Alexander and what his Successors made of him lie at the heart of the impact of Macedon in the art of Central Asia.[40]

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[37] Naples, Museo Nazionale 906: Smith 1994, 109-113, fig. 4.

[38] For the identification, see Torelli 2003, 245-246; Palagia forthcoming. For Alexander in Persian dress, see Palagia 2000, 188 n. 90; Lane Fox 2007, 278-279.

[39] Demetrius I: Cribb 2007, 340, fig. 22; Hansen et al. 2009, 372, cat. no. 277. The coin type was repeated by Agathocles of Bactria: Cribb 2007, 331, fig. 21. That the Bactrian kings' coinage advertised their connection with Alexander's legacy is argued by Cribb 2007, 339-340.

[40] I am grateful to Richard Stoneman for inviting me to a delightful conference, and to John Boardman for inspiration, for a memorable visit to the exhibition of the Afghanistan treasures at the Musée Guimet in Paris in 2007, and for the photo Fig. 11. My thanks are also due to Guntram and Heidermarie Koch for the photo Fig. 1, to Hans R. Goette for the photos Figs. 5 and 10, and to Andrew Meadows for the photos Figs. 3, 12, 14.

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Oriental Imagery and Alexander’s Legend in Art: Reconnaissance

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> The story is told that many years afterwards Onesicritus was reading aloud to Lysimachus, who was now king, the fourth book of his history, in which was the tale of the Amazon, at which Lysimachus smiled gently and said: ‘And where was I at the time?’
>
> Plutarch, *Alexander* 46

The existence of oriental elements in the iconography of Alexander seems to be very often taken for granted. The scholarship of the subject is well aware of the presence of such attributes as the ram horns and the elephant scalp in portraits or images of Alexander, and as far as their origin is concerned, hardly anyone challenges seriously the association of the horns with Ammon, or the elephant’s with the Indian conquests. Also the notion that such images served mostly the purposes of the Diadochi and their successors, seems to be widely accepted. The topic has never, nonetheless, received full recognition in scholarship; moreover, the most recent attempt at monographic study on Alexander’s iconography, Margarete Bieber’s *Alexander the Great in Greek and Roman Art*, which dates from 1964, presents only a brief glance over a large collection of artefacts, while all later major works (Stewart 1993, Olaguer-Feliú y Alonso 2000, Dahmen 2007, Hölscher 2009), however interesting contribution to the study of Alexander’s imagery they make, are limited to specific topics within the broader subject. None of them deals in depth with oriental elements and influences, however, and neither does Bieber’s study, since it is mostly concerned with the periodization of the extant portraits.

In the present paper I would like to give a short and preliminary overview of Alexander’s iconography within the Hellenistic Greek style art, concentrating on the assimilation with and attributes of these deities who were

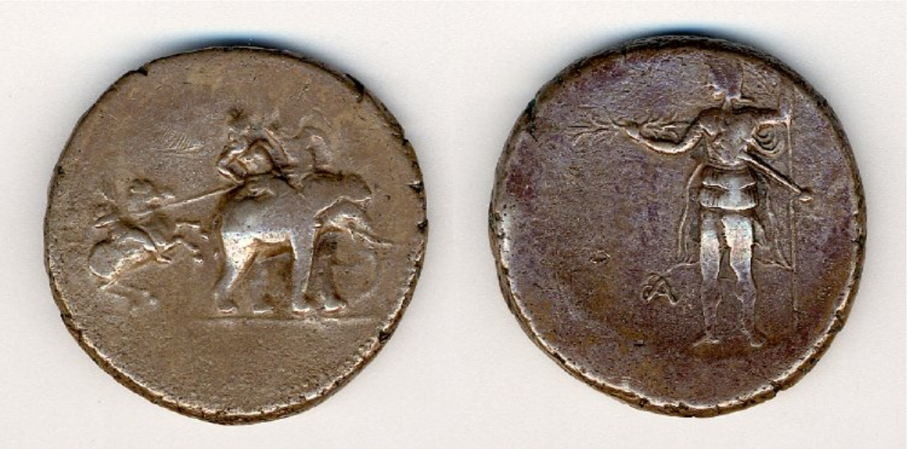

Fig. 1.Alexander fighting Porus (Obv.) and Alexander-Zeus (Rev,). ‘Porus Medallion’. British Museum, inv. GC28p191.61. © Trustees of the British Museum.

perceived in relation with the East. In the conclusion I will discuss tentatively the potential that lies in combining the archaeological evidence of imagery with the study of textual sources, and their romanticizing aspect in the first place.

Attributes and Attributions

According to both historical sources and archaeological evidence, lifetime portraits of Alexander did not include too many varied attributes, especially those otherwise connected with the gods; we can quote the well known anecdote in Plutarch about Lysippus criticizing Apelles for painting the king with Zeus’ thunderbolt (a work which is probably reflected in the painting from the House of the Vettii in Pompeii), while he himself believed the spear to be the only attribute suitable for the king (Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 24). Plutarch does not elaborate on Alexander’s reaction to this controversy; however, the so-called ‘Porus medallions’ struck in India, point at some kind of royal acceptance of such imagery [Fig. 1]. On the reverse of these beautiful coins armed Alexander stands frontally, in his left hand holding a vertically positioned spear, and a thunderbolt in the right hand. A possible (posthumous) analogy for such representation can be found in Pausanias (5.25.1) who mentions a lost statue from Olympia: ‘the offering near the great temple, though supposed to be a likeness of Zeus, is really Alexander, the son of Philip’.

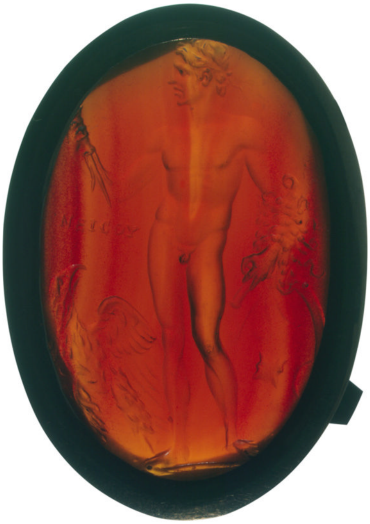

Fig. 2. Deified Alexander. 'Neisos gem', The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; inv. ZH 609. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets.

The so called 'Neisos gem' from the Hermitage (inv. No. ZH 609 [Fig. 2]) makes another analogy (with the exception that Alexander Keraunophoros is portrayed in heroic nudity), but it cannot be precisely dated, and however attractive and plausible Pollitt's (1986: 23) attribution of both the gem and the medallions to Pyrgoteles might be, it cannot be taken as a decisive argument, and it is quite likely that both the Olympia statue and the gem are posthumous likenesses. Moreover, the authorship of Pyrgoteles, even if agreed upon, would not imply works from Alexander's lifetime.

The reverse of the Porus issues is the only preserved lifetime example of Alexander represented in a god's guise, but the obverse is as well unique in employing an oriental subject in the king's iconography dated from his reign. It shows a cavalryman attacking with a spear a group of riders on a war elephant: a scene interpreted as the fight with king Porus on the Hydaspes, hence the coins' nickname (cf. esp. Holt 2003: 117-138). It also justifies the association of the elephant scalp in later representations, the early Ptolemaic coins in particular, with the Indian expedition.

For the possible acceptance of the other important attribute of Eastern origin, the horns of Ammon, we have only indirect textual reference: Alexander's visit to the oracle of Siwah, and his 'adoption' as the god's son. Possibly of more importance than this incident's meaning for the Greeks, is its political bearing in Egypt: being named the son of Ammon implied being accepted as a legitimate ruler of the land, the pharaoh. We know that Alexander, and later also his son, was depicted in temple reliefs in the Egyptian pharaonic manner (by the irony of fates these images, so completely devoid of individual traits, are the only surviving inscribed original 'portraits' of Alexander). It might seem a logical step to 'translate' this exaltation and its political impact into Greek terms by employing the long established syncretic image of the horned Zeus-Ammon – but for all we know this happened only after Alexander's death on the coins of one of his successors, Lysimachus of Thrace. The only ancient source which comments on the king appearing in Ammon's guise with the horns (*kerata*) at symposia, is Ephippus of Olynthus (Ath. 12.537e), otherwise notorious for his dislike for Alexander, and suggesting all kinds of exotic costumes employed by the king, including that of Artemis.

Therefore we should assume that the two main oriental elements, the ram horns and the elephant scalp, appeared in iconography within a relatively long time span but within the same era of Alexander's reception; the dating of the earliest coins is respectively 322 BC for Ptolemy and 297 BC for Lysimachus. Other Diadochi, either in their satrapal or royal issues, did not stress Alexander's divinity to such extent: in Macedonia Arrhidaios, Alexander IV and Cassander continued the young Heracles lifetime types of Alexander, while in Babylon and Syria Seleucus, apart from continuing the earlier types, and issuing in 300-298 BC a short series of elephant scalp portraits analogous to Ptolemy's, struck a mysterious type in Susa (Mørkholm 1991: 72, Pl. VIII 139-140), which is of particular interest, since it alludes directly to Dionysos' iconography (panther helmet and bull horns; for the latter see Eur. *Bacch.* 100: ταυρόκερως, Ath. 11.476a: ταυρόμορφος; on the topic see Tondriau 1952: 445-448) [Fig. 3]. The identification of the person represented in this guise has been the matter of a long-standing dispute (for its summary see Hadley 1974: 10-12); Hadley himself proposed a convincing series of arguments against identification with Seleucus and in favour of Alexander-Dionysos, so one may tentatively assume that even if it had been

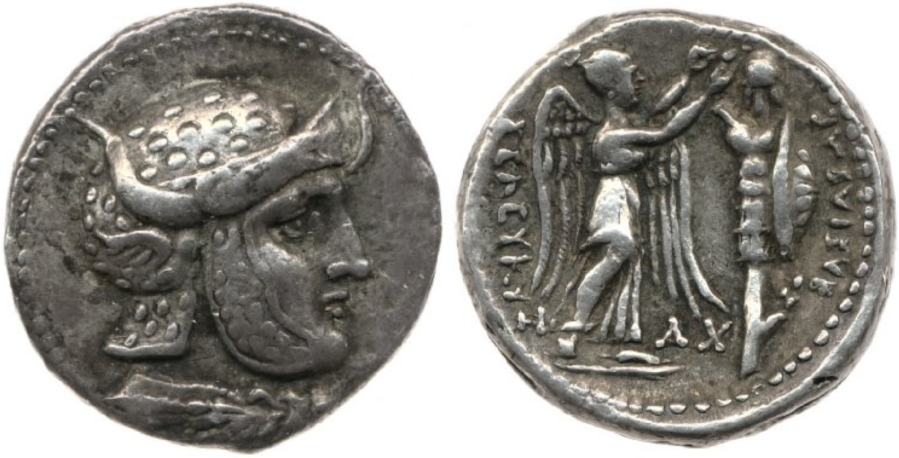

Fig. 3. Alexander-Seleucus-Dionysos. Silver tetradrachm of Seleucus I Nicator. British Museum; reg. No. 2002,0101.1358. © Trustees of the British Museum

Nicator who was intended to be shown on this coin, it would have been a Seleucus deriving his own divinity from Alexander and his Dionysiac associations.

The identification of the aforementioned coin image as Alexander should not, for certain, be discarded lightly, even on the grounds of the respective lack of similarity to the facial features of the assumed portrait issues of Alexander himself (Alexandrian Heracles tetradrachms of 325 BC, cf. Pollitt 1986: 25-26), Lysimachus and Ptolemy. According to late writers, the Dionysiac aspect of Alexander's divinity was the first officially recognized in 323 BC by the Athenians (Diog. Laert. 6.63), and regardless of this statement's accurateness (see Goukowsky 1981: 6), it became later one of the most popular elements of the self-imaging of the Hellenistic rulers: the kings either adopted the epithets like *Neos Dionysos* (Ptolemies and the Pontic dynasty), or at least less directly in their iconography and propaganda alluded to the cult of Dionysos (e.g. Ptolemies, Seleucids, Antigonids, Pontic and Bactrian dynasties), which may be also connected to the presence of Orphic cults in Macedonia, attested in the archaeological material since at least the 4th century BC (the Derveni and Pella finds). It is disputable, however, to what extent Alexander regarded himself as Dionysos, and modern views tend to favour regular worship as equal deities over impersonation (cf. Ross Taylor 1927: 61-62; Goukowsky 1981: 45). We have no evidence that Alexander would style himself after Dionysos in art; again, this comes in the time of the Successors. It is not surprising that the new, far more complex than lifetime, images would emerge among the Diadochi during the struggle for power and heritage.

The portrait proposed by Lysimachus is in close accordance to what Alexander may have imagined himself, since the proclamation of his descent from the Egyptian counterpart of Zeus was 'official', and must have formed the core of his plans for prospective apotheosis (provided that there were any, but both the plans for deification of his parents, and the shape of the Philippeum in Olympia, as well as the established cult of ancestors in Macedonia seem to point at it). The facial features on the issues in question are idealized and possibly some of them are therefore exaggerated but probably based on a physiognomic portrait, with bulging eyes and the furrowed brow of late renditions (Bieber 1964: 64) are exaggerated; possibly the closest of what we have for Alexander's real looks, together with the Lysippean Azara herm. The hair is longish and bound with the fillet-shaped *diadema* with flowing *tainiai* – the epitome of royal power in the Hellenistic age, possibly itself of at least partly oriental, Persian, and not Macedonian, origin (Ritter

1965: 31-55; Prestianni Giallombardo 1989), and allegedly derived from Alexander, but interestingly enough never present on his lifetime portraits.[1] Over the ear a respectively large and carefully executed ram horn emerges, in a shape reminiscent of the images of Zeus-Ammon on earlier emissions, for instance of Cyrene. Such protruding, articulated horns can be also found in several Hellenistic sculptures representing the divinity, with the sole difference that unlike his mythical divine father, the youthful Alexander is always beardless, just as is his Heracles.[2]

The Ptolemaic image repeats the Heracles issues of Alexander as far as composition is concerned, but the lion scalp is replaced by elephant scalp with tusks and trunk and flapping ears over the shoulder. There is also a peculiar type of fillet over the king's brow[3] (omitted on both Seleucus and Agathocles of Syracuse analogies; cf. Dahmen 2007: 113, 116-18), which will be discussed later in this paper. The breast of Alexander is covered with Zeus' Aegis, therefore the whole iconographic programme of this coin seems to correspond to the two sides of the Porus medallions. The cult statue of the *ktistes* in Alexandria may have worn the Aegis (Ridgway 2001: 117; Moreno 1987: 29-30, proposes a representation on horseback for the *ktistes* image, but his sources do not necessarily indicate that the statue in question was the cult one), and it also appears, together with the fillet *diadema*, on coins with

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[1] The only possible exception is the Neisos gem, but the presence of the diadema can as well make the argument against its lifetime execution; it is very difficult to interpret the shape behind the head on the Porus medallions because of the state of preservation and not too detailed rendering of the head.

[2] I tackle this particular issue more in detail in an article to be published in *Classica Cracoviensia* XV (2011); I also proposed a new interpretation of this image, linking it to the iconography of Apollo Carneius, present in the coinage of Cyrene and of Chalcidian Aphytis (always accompanying the Zeus-Ammon types) in a paper presented at the conference 'Alexander the Great and Egypt: History, Art, Tradition', organized in Wrocław by the University of Wrocław and Helmut Schmidt Universität in Hamburg, Nov. 18-19, 2011.

[3] Stewart 1993: 434, and Dahmen 2007: 113-116, argue that the fillet was absent from the earliest satrapal issues of Ptolemy I and was introduced only several years later (around 315 BC), but the specimen evidence given is not entirely convincing; Svoronos 1904, Nos. 18ff, Tab. I 12ff, describes all such issues as 'diademed and horned head of deified Alexander with elephant headdress and aegis'. However tempting this hypothesis might be, since it suggests a later introduction of a possible Dionysiac element, it requires closer look at the coins in question. The fillet seems to be missing from some specimens of analogous issue struck by Seleucus (which also omits the ram horn), but this can be due to the much poorer quality of engraving; it is certainly absent from the ca. 310 BC stater of Agathocles of Syracuse, which otherwise features the most idealized image of all coins in question (Stewart 1993: Fig. 87; Dahmen 2007: Fig. 6).

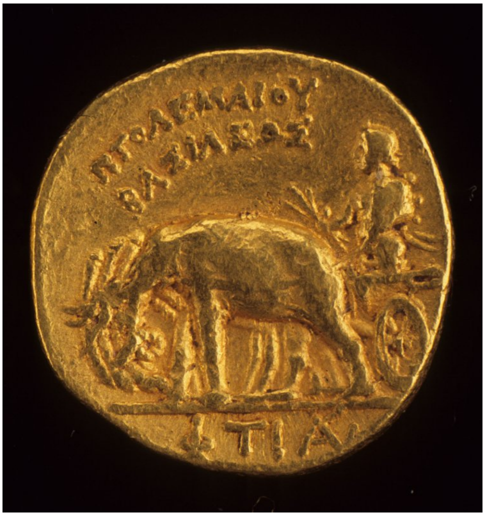

Fig. 4. Deified Alexander driving a quadriga of elephants. Reverse of Ptolemy I Soter's golden stater. British Museum; reg. No. 1897,0104.508. © Trustees of the British Museum.

the portrait of Ptolemy Soter, launched ca. 305 BC and continued throughout the dynasty. Moreover, as if to stress the importance of the elephant symbolism and include it in his own propaganda, Ptolemy struck a short series of gold staters around 300 BC, whose obverse shows his own head, while on the reverse deified Alexander, driving an elephant quadriga, is represented [Fig. 4]. The conqueror holds a thunderbolt in his right hand and a cornucopia in the left one; his left arm is wrapped in what resembles the Aegis as pictured on the Neisos gem.

To what extent these issues can be linked to the Porus medallions and the Hermitage gem? Of all the Successors Ptolemy exploited Alexander's divinity and legend to the greatest extent: he resided in the most illustrious of the cities founded by the Conqueror, he governed the mythical land, where the epiphany of Alexander's divine status had taken place, he had seized the king's body, thus breaking the dynastic tradition of the Argeads, demanding for the royalty to be buried at Aigai, he made of Alexandria the centre of its *ktistes'* cult. Also the literary legends of Alexander possibly originated at least partly from his court, and his memoirs must have added not only to the historical account but also to the myth. Moreover, one must take into account the long established tradition of monarchy in Egypt, whose very concept required for the king to be divine: living manifestation of the superior deity on earth. Ptolemy needed a deified Alexander for his purposes more than any other Hellenistic ruler; to legitimize his own authority in Egypt, he had to become lawful successor of the son of Ammon, i.e. Alexander. Therefore the stress given to Alexander's divinity at the beginning of the Macedonian rule in Egypt had very direct political meaning, and the choice to continue with imagery that probably had not been recognized by the king himself, but emphasized his godlike status, was obvious.

Early Ptolemaic Alexandria provides us with more evidence for the character of Alexander's cult and image and its oriental or Dionysiac flavour, even though there is hardly any archaeological evidence to corroborate the literary sources. In book 5.197d-203b of the *Deiphnosophistai*, Athenaios gives us a detailed description of the *pompē* organized by Ptolemy Philadelphus in honour of his deceased parents and their apotheosis. The procession was mainly Dionysiac in character, and among the exhibits, it featured golden statues of Alexander, driven by elephants. Unfortunately, Athenaios himself, or possibly his source, fails to give us a more detailed description of the statues; a fatal flaw of so many ancient texts. Apparently, however, the elephant quadriga was perceived as an image closely connected with the Dionysiac triumphal Eastern journey, and the celebration emphasized this association. Thus the Ptolemies became successors not only of Alexander, but also of Dionysos himself – if such differentiation is at all justifiable in this case. The choice should not be surprising in Egypt: ever since the time of Herodotus Dionysos had been identified with Osiris (Hdt. 2.144; Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 34; cf. Martin 1987: 91), and was considered son of Ammon. It also bore meaning for the Macedonians, since the cult of the god of wine, himself originating from neighbouring Thrace, and very strong on the territories conquered by Philip, was one of the most important aspects of religious life under the Argeads.

We should now briefly return to the question of the diadem. Fredricksmeyer (1997) argues that this royal insigne in form of a fillet, so characteristic for Hellenistic rulers, was adopted by Alexander during his march on Persia (possibly after the battle of Arbela), but in its origin was neither Persian, nor Macedonian. He proposes a third source of its iconography, connected to the conquest of the East: the images of youthful Dionysos with his forehead bound with a ribbon. In doing so he invokes textual evidence for such attribution, namely Pliny (*HN* 7.191) and Diodorus (4.4.4), who claim that it was the god of wine who invented the royal diadem.[4] Ritter (1987: 298) mentions such an analogy, too, without making further remarks on the details of iconography; the Dionysiac meaning of this attribute had also been suggested in scholarship (Stewart 1993: 233), together with the observation that Ptolemy's coins present Alexander with the ribbon bound over his forehead, and protruding from under the elephant scalp: a most unusual arrangement for the Hellenistic royal iconography. Much as the arguments are

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[4] Diodorus adds that the invention had to do with 'warding off headaches which every man gets from drinking too much wine', which makes additional pun on Alexander's alleged inebriation.

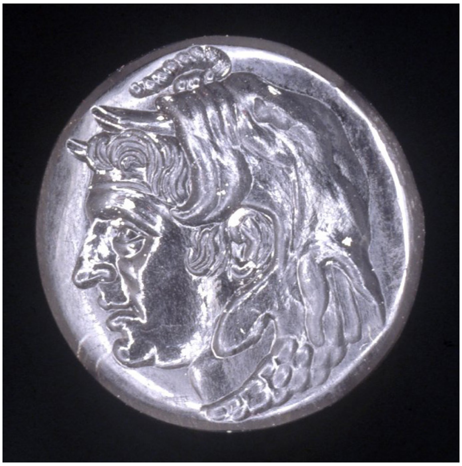

Fig. 5. Alexander (?) in the elephant scalp. Hellenistic black jasper sealstone. British Museum; inv. Gem 1188. © Trustees of the British Museum.

attractive and might seem convincing, this discrepancy with the tradition raises several questions.

Stewart rightly notes that the *diadema* of the Hellenistic kings and queens is located always in accordance with the Lysimachus model, much higher on the brow, above the hairline. Ptolemaic portraits make no exception to this rule; on the coins of Berenice II the fillet is seen only partially, as it is placed beneath the veil covering the top of the head but its position is analogous to the male portraits, even though it might seem logical to place it lower in order to stress its presence. Therefore the Alexander/elephant scalp coins and corresponding gems indeed make the sole known instance of such placement of the ribbon in the royal context [Fig. 5].

One should, however, bear in mind that the image of youthful Dionysos is largely a late Classical and Hellenistic invention (even though in literary sources he is called 'youthful' as early as in the Homeric Hymn, 7.3), which leads to the question which way the inspiration went. Moreover, even though some kind of headband had been associated with Dionysos in the Classical age (Sophocles, *O.t.* 209, gives him the epithet *chrysomitras*; *LIMC III, 1*: 414, comments on the epithet as alluding to some unidentified kind of oriental headdress), the type of *diadema* in question appears in sculpture around mid 4th century according to the highest possible chronology based on the style of extant Roman copies, if not as late at the turn of the 4th and 3rd centuries (cf. *LIMC III, 2*: Fig. 120, 124, 125, and commentary, respectively for comparisons with the styles of Leochares or Euphranor, Timoteos, and Praxiteles), therefore simultaneously with the coins of Ptolemy, to continue into the Hellenistic and Roman times. The attributions of the early representations of this type to Leochares or Euphranor would place it within the circle of the Macedonian court and sculptors known for executing early portraits of Alexander, which additionally complicates the picture, demanding a more in depth study of styles and chronologies, which lies beyond the scope of the present survey. Nonetheless, it is not impossible that this one-time placement of the diadema in royal context makes a contribution to the Dionysiac imagery of Alexander and the formation of the notion of his divinity, but whether this association can be extended to the use of the insigne, different in shape and placing, by the Hellenistic rulers, remains dubious.

The date of possible association of Alexander's features with the Sun god Helios in art may be tentatively set around the time of Lysippus' solar quadriga and the Rhodian Colossus by Chares of Lindos; Alexander-like facial features can also be traced on the 4th century-onward Rhodian coins showing the crowned head of Helios.[5] Undoubtedly, many Hellenistic and Roman images of first Helios and later also Mithras derive their facial features from Alexander, but hardly any of them can be identified as intentionally portraying the Macedonian conqueror for his own sake (the Capitoline Alexander-Helios is one of these few): they more likely make a perfect example of syncretic renditions in which the Alexander type overlays that of the god. The *corona radiata* therefore is a generic attribute, present in Helios' iconography since mid fifth century BC (Mills Holden 1964: 36, n. 17), rather than one specific to Alexander. Oriental roots of its shape in case of the conventional solar crown, as encountered on the numerous representations of Helios, from the Rhodian coins to the famous metope of the temple of Athena from Ilium Novum, with the possible reflexion of Lysippus' chariot of the Sun, as well as the crown worn by many Hellenistic rulers and Roman emperors, are arguable. One could also pose the question whether the image, which had been established for so long in the Greek world, could evoke any visual association with the East, even in the context of Alexander's worship of Helios as the god who opens the path to the East (Fauth 1995: xxviii; Goukowsky 1981: 40). The dynamics of the association with Helios and his various counterparts and derivatives, as well as the influence on the imagery of solar deities, would be certainly worth a further study.

One more form of the attribute should be mentioned here, one much more rarely found, which does not correspond with earlier Hellenic iconographic tradition. It forms a kind of solar disc placed over the brow of the portrayed person, resembling on one hand the attribute of various Egyptian deities, but also of the sacred bulls, on the other hand – the Phrygian deity Mên. Since the preserved examples are dated to late Hellenism, they will be discussed later.

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[5] For the controversy around these issues and their relationship to Alexander's imagery see Hölscher 1971: 37; Stewart 1993: 180.

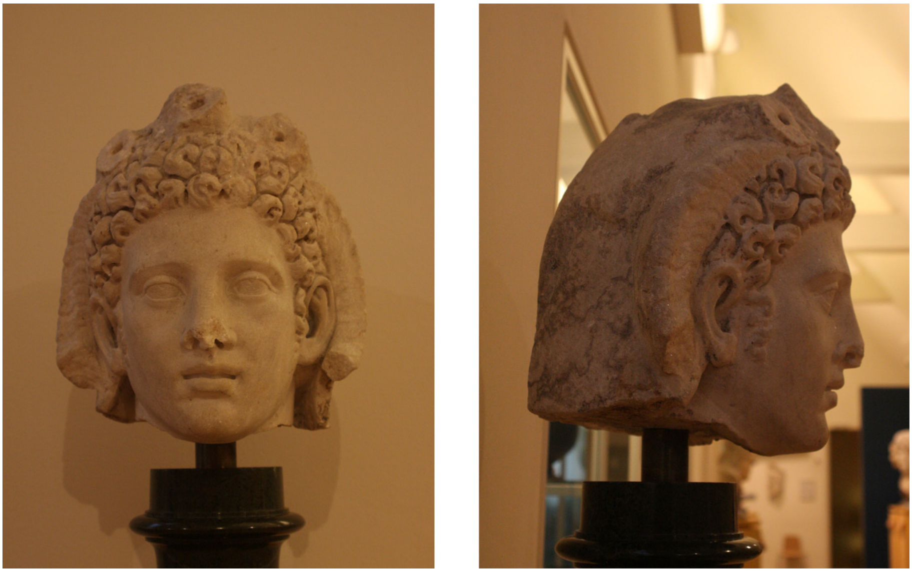

Fig. 6a-b. Alexander (?) with ram horns and elephant scalp; 2nd century AD Roman copy of a Hellenistic original. © Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen. Photo: Agnieszka Fulińska.

Alexander and Alexanders

The number of preserved Alexander images with Eastern attributes from later centuries of the Hellenistic age is frustratingly small, especially when compared to the Heracles type.

The situation is not, however, as desperate as some scholars would have it. Karsten Dahmen (2007: 59) is wrong when he states that 'there is no piece of sculpture that could be linked with' the elephant scalp monetary types. A small bronze head with the elephant scalp, dated to early Imperial time, is in the collection of Landesmuseum Württenberg in Stuttgart (inv. No. 3.814), and it may be expected to be derived from a larger piece featuring the attribute in question, possibly a Hellenistic sculpture representing either Alexander or the personification of Alexandria, even if its contextual function was indeed to represent the Roman province of Africa (Kähler 2009: 246). A more convincing example comes from Denmark: the Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen is in possession of a life-size marble head (inv. No. P 378 [Fig. 6a-b]) whose state of preservation shows very clearly that it had once been decorated with tusks and trunk, since there are holes for fixing in place these elements, possibly executed in different material or added in the *disiecta* *membra* technique. The head's provenance is Northern Africa (Carthage or Utica), it is dated to 150-200 AD, and described as Roman copy of a Greek original, but since to my knowledge at the time of writing of this paper it has not been published *in extenso* (the only mention of it is found in Richter 1965: 255 and Fig. 1724; while it is omitted in the monographic studies by Bernouilli 1905, Schreiber 1903, and Bieber 1964, as well as in recent scholarship on both Hellenistic sculpture and Alexander's iconography), it is difficult to say anything more specific about it at this point. Nonetheless, it clearly shows that the type was not absent from monumental sculpture in the round.

The head is particularly interesting because it also features the horns of Ammon, sculpted together with the head in one piece of marble, which again goes against Dahmen's statement (*loc. cit.*) that 'there is no attestation of such a portrait [i.e. with horns of Ammon corresponding to Lysimachus coins] in sculpture'. This head, being a combination of both attributes is richer in its iconography than the Lysimachean type; it does not repeat the Ptolemaic type either, but together with the marble heads of horned Zeus-Ammon, Apollo Carneius, and possible rulers-as-Ammon (cf. LIMC I: *Ammon*, cat. Nos. 180-186) makes a case for the existence of the type as such.[6]

The Copenhagen head lacks a diadem of any kind but it should be stressed that contrariwise to the Hellenistic rulers Alexander is almost always represented without the fillet-shaped *diadema* in sculpture, which is the case in particular of these examples which are believed to be copies of lifetime or early Hellenistic originals.

As has already been mentioned before, Alexander's influence on the iconography of various solar deities is problematic, even though the types very often bear resemblance to facial features or characteristic traits of the king's imagery. Several of such sculptures have been identified with Alexander with various degrees of certainty; among those that are widely agreed upon one can name the aforementioned Capitoline Alexander-Helios (inv. No. 723) and the Istanbul head from Anatolian Kyme (Istanbul Archaeology Museums, inv. No. 388; see Stewart 1993: Fig. 137-138), but in a majority of cases the proper attribution is hindered by the fact that the headdress is missing, therefore every reconstruction is at risk of inaccuracy.

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[6] Stewart's (1993: 283) proposal to link the Thasos head with Lysimachus coin seems far-fetched at best, since the head apparently lacks the horns, while the headband, as described by the author, is 'tubular'. It is not possible to check the claims at the similarity of features to the coins without a thorough examination of the piece (which is virtually impossible due to a prolonged closure of the museum in Thasos), since the head has not been properly published and lacks available photographic documentation that would allow for such comparisons.

Two examples mentioned before present a different variation of solar iconography, and they are worth a closer look, even if their association with Alexander himself (otherwise than a model for a type of youthful male/deity image) can be only tentative at this point. The solar disc with rays of a star is present on a small terracotta of Egyptian provenance and unknown dating (this is another example of a very poorly documented item) head from the Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen described as 'head with Alexander's physiognomy'; a more elaborate version of the set of cosmic symbols is represented by the well known terracotta appliqué from Brussels (Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, inv. No. 1938 [Fig. 7]), linked to Alexander's imagery because of the facial features and the *anastolē*, but with more certainty identified with the Phrygian Mên (Massar 2009: 243), identified in the Hellenistic Age with several deities among whom were Helios, Dionysos and Apollo (Lane 1997: 89-92). It is worth mentioning, too, that within Mên's iconography the bull or the bucranium, sometimes reduced to bull horns or a crescent, also plays an important role (Lane 1997: 102-104). The association of Alexander with Mên and its possible influence on later Mithras imagery, as well as association with Mithras himself (especially in the case of the so-called 'dying' Alexanders, cf. Cumont 1956: 192; Cumont 1947) requires further study, especially in the context of its Persian roots, but it is well attested that Mên and his cosmic

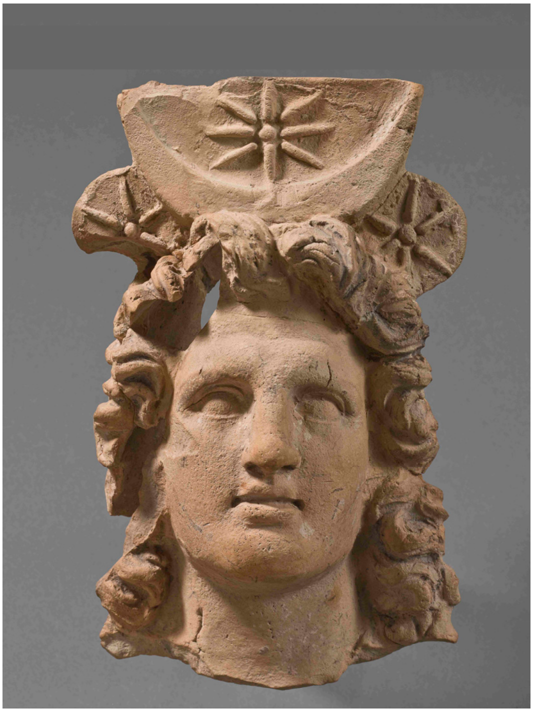

Fig. 7. Terracotta head of Mên, associated with Alexander. Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels; inv. A1938. © Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels.

attributes play a major role in the iconography of the Pontic kingdom (Summerer 1995). Therefore we may tentatively propose a slightly different identification, which is strengthened by the piece's provenance from Amisos: with Mithridates VI Eupator assimilated both to Alexander *and* Helios/Mên/Mithras. The problems which remain to be solved are as follows: whether there is any correspondence between the two types of solar disc representations, and what might possibly be their source and prototype.

Despite the fact that Alexander himself is rarely portrayed with his oriental attributes, their importance is preserved and attested by the successors of his empire down to the end of Hellenism. The Hellenistic age as well as Roman times see a persevering tendency among the rulers of referring to Alexander in their propaganda. Since images were among the most efficient means of disseminating official ideas, we encounter numerous allusions to the Conqueror in royal and imperial iconography. These can be either direct repetitions of an established type (or its particular features, such as the *anastolē*, to quote the most common example), or subtler allusions, among which the adoption of attributes is the most popular strategy.

For many cases only indirect evidence can be quoted, such as the royal epithets; some symbols appear outside the image of the ruler as such (for instance Dionysiac ivy wreaths on the coins of Mithridates VI). The most popular attribute was the *corona radiata*, present on coins of the Ptolemies, Seleucids and Roman emperors, whose reference to Alexander is much less direct than of the other attributes, but the arguments in favour of the association with solar deities make the case interesting from the point of view of Alexander's iconography and reception.

The two main oriental attributes were not very often imitated in the iconography of the Hellenistic kings. The horn of Ammon is encountered solely on the coins of Arsinoe Philadelphos and Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus (in the latter case the types are only slightly stylistically modified repetitions of the Lysimachus issues, and the intention of representing the Pontic king on them is uncertain), despite the fact that all Ptolemies as pharaohs bore the title of sons of Ammon. Alexander in elephant *exuviae* without the headband appeared on the coins of Agathocles of Syracuse (minted ca. 310 BC), and the scalp itself can be encountered in two Hellenistic Greek contexts, apart from the aforementioned coins of Seleucus Nicator. One of them is the Bactrian kingdom under Demetrius (early 2nd century BC) who was the only ruler to have himself portrayed with this attribute [Fig. 8], which obviously played a double part, as a reference to Alexander, whose image was used by the Bactrian kings to legitimize their secession from the Seleucids (cf. the

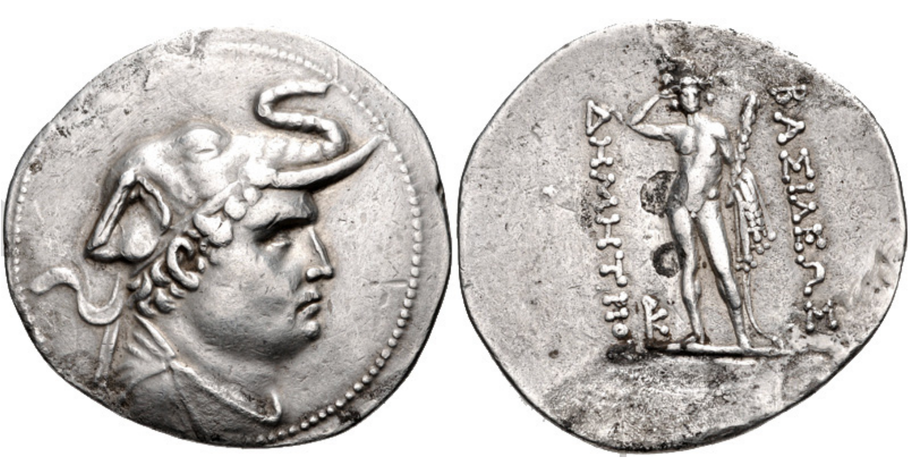

Fig. 8. Silver tetradrachm of Demetrios I Aniketos of Bactria. CNG Electronic Auction 257 (8 June 2011), Lot number: 178. © Classical Numismatic Group; http://www.cngcoins.com.

'pedigree' issues of Agathocles), and as an emblem of their domain: the easternmost of the possessions of Alexander's empire. This is, therefore, the only instance in which the elephant appears in a context close to original, and Tarn (1980: 131) might be right saying that the elephant's symbolism was broader than just Dionysiac or Indian connotations, and represented 'power far extended', once held by 'the man who had reached the summit of human greatness'. If this notion (from our point of view not excluding the other associations) corresponded with the Hellenistic mind, 'far' would mean first of all the oriental lands conquered by Alexander and given to Hellenic rule.

The other example is a series of bronze coins dating from the time of Cleopatra I as regent for her underage son Ptolemy VI Philometor. On the obverse they show a head in profile, with facial features which can be described as showing some general resemblance to Alexander's but may seem more feminine, with elephant scalp and without any other attributes [Fig. 9]. The legend, where present, reads ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΚΛΕΟΠΑΤΡΑΣ. The reverse is generic, featuring the Ptolemaic eagle. The head may represent either Alexander or the queen in his guise (which would be a most unusual occurrence), or else personification of Alexandria in the costume of its *ktistes* from the earliest dynastic coinage. The interpretation of this coin requires further study of possible analogies apart from the later representations of Africa in Roman iconography of the provinces, but such research falls beyond the scope of the present study.

It is worth mentioning that many elements of Alexander's 'oriental' iconography were continued in Roman times, along with the more popular themes such as Heracles, and many other that were apparently introduced only in that period. Roman emperors continued the Hellenistic tendency of

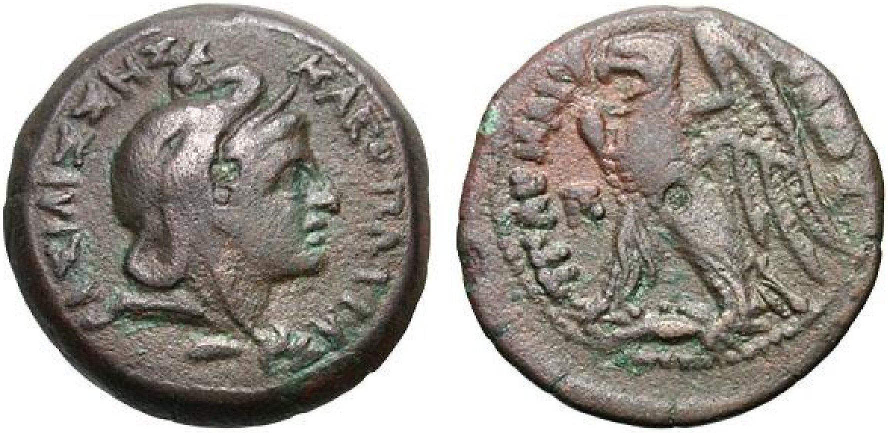

Fig. 9. Bronze coin (22 mm) of Cleopatra I Syra and Ptolemy VI Philometor. Gemini Auction V (6 January 2009), Lot number: 730. © Gemini, LLC; http://www.geminiauction.com.

imitating Alexander; the most striking examples are the emperors of the Severan dynasty, Caracalla and Alexander Severus, whose golden medallions show not only admiration for the Conqueror but also attempts at equalling themselves to the great Macedonian (Vermeule 1982).

One may tentatively link the popularity of elephant bigas and quadrigas in Roman iconography, especially on imperial coins, with the tradition and legend of Alexander, even though by the time this image probably lost its direct reference to the king. Still, it is right to assume that Ptolemy's gold staters and Ptolemaic celebrations featuring triumphal Dionysiac processions with elephants played an important role in elevating the elephant to the major symbol of strength, power and divinity (Stewart 1993: 236). All Hellenistic and Roman rulership is indebted to Alexander, and persons so differing from each other in temper and political ideas as Caesar, Pompey, Antony and Augustus (to limit the list to Romans only, and within the chronological scope of the last decades of Hellenistic monarchies) take from his legend as much as their contemporaries such as Mithridates Eupator or Cleopatra VII.

Romancing the image?

'Orientalism' in Alexander's iconography begins with one of the most romanticized episodes of his conquests: the war with Porus. Or, to be exact, we interpret the scene as representing a fight with Porus because the anecdotic character of this episode made it the epitome of the Indian campaign. The way we tend to read all other elements is based on the Romance tradition as well, since both the horns of Ammon and the solar crown point at traits that for the later writers were synonymous with miraculous deeds and events. As scholars of the subject point out, the 'horned Alexander', derived from the Lysimachus coins and their reflections in other media, must have played an important role in the Islamic tradition of the Macedonian conqueror,[7] while the Helios image gave birth to the idea of his celestial journey (Runni Anderson 1927: 100) as well as to the notion of Alexander Cosmocrator. Therefore a 'reversed' question – to what extent Hellenistic iconography reflects early stages of the formation of the Romance – does not seem ungrounded, especially considering the fact that the 'oriental' (and divine) attributes appear at the same time when allegedly the legend that would produce the *Alexander Romance* begins to form.

The Dionysiac tradition of Alexander's deification was proven by Goukowsky (1981) to be posthumous; moreover, the legendary core of it to be fabricated mostly by Cleitarchus (cf. Pearson 1960: 214-215), while it is largely absent from the more reliable sources. The scholar argues that the Carmanian triumphal procession was no more than a traditional *kômos*, one of a series of such celebrations organized by Alexander and his troops during their march through India. Goukowsky, who is more concerned with texts and history than iconography and legend, remarks on the heroic and/or divine honours bestowed on Alexander by the peoples of the Indus, who apparently perceived the conqueror as yet another avatar of their deities, in particular Indra (Goukowsky 1981: 28). I have no expertise to discuss his arguments one way or another, but the probable omission of these episodes in the historical accounts of Callisthenes and Ptolemy, and their sudden rise to eminence in the slightly later sources, more devoted to the legend, makes an interesting case for the study of development of iconography and its relevance for the study of Alexander's myth.

Goukowsky argues for the existence of an oral tradition of Dionysiac exploits of Alexander in the East, but lays aside iconographic evidence, assuming that much as the elephant scalp should be viewed as a direct allusion to India, it is not (yet) Dionysiac *per se*. If, however, we take a look at it from a different perspective – not of origins but of possible reception – this view may change. Whatever the intention of Ptolemy and his engraver, the image of Alexander in the elephant scalp, and even more driving the quadriga of elephants in a pose reminding of a very common image of a Nike driving a chariot (popular as a symbol of race victories, and present among others on Philip II's coins) must have added to viewing the king as *Neos Dionysos*, the triumphant conqueror of India. Such an interpretation would add arguments to the dispute about the early shape of the fillet *diadema*, too.

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[7] I'm not quoting scholarship on this particular subject, because a number of papers in the current volume are dedicated to discussions on this topic, and they certainly give the up-to-date bibliography, and one certainly more reliable than I could compile.

The development of Alexander's iconography in the Hellenistic time shows that the most important aspects of the king's image were his divine ancestry and his identification with various divinities, both pointing at his legendary exploits in the East. Two contexts seem to have importance for the understanding of this process: the ever-popular concept of *imitatio Alexandri*, which by itself could have iconographic, political and ideological aspects, and the dissemination of an Alexander-influenced idealized male type, present in a number of pieces of art on various topics, from the representations of divinities to private images. I believe that in order to understand the presence and meaning of Alexander in the Hellenistic (and Roman) frame of mind, one has to abandon the hypercritical stance that was taken by historians of art (see Ridgway 2001: 109) in response to the enthusiastic views inherited after 19th century Winckelmann style optimistic approach to identifications and attributions. Hypercriticism tends to blind us to the ideas, topics, motifs and images that permeate culture and civilization crossing the boundaries of particular arts and disciplines, and creating what Diana Spencer (2002) brilliantly nicknamed the 'cultural myth'.

As was mentioned before, many images of Helios or Mithras from both Hellenistic and Roman times bear striking resemblance to the facial features of Alexander. The same applies to numerous statues of Heracles, the universal hero who travelled to the ends of the known world, and also being the dynastic patron of the Argeads. Furthermore, the portraits of Hellenistic rulers also tend to be idealized in the resemblance of Alexander's portraiture. They are indeed often derived from Alexander's image and I dare say that in many cases the presence of several 'personages' may be both 'mechanical': reflecting a generic idealized ruler type, and chosen to serve a direct propagandistic purpose.

In the frame of mind of the Hellenistic viewer Alexander *had become* Heracles, Dionysos and/or Helios, and consistently also Apollo, Mithras and/or Mên. In an analogous process the rulers *became* Alexander, just as they *became* Dionysos or Isis. From the point of view of iconography it is of less significance whether the worshipped *persona* was the king himself or his *daimon*, as Ross Taylor convincingly proposed so many years ago (Ross Taylor 1927). In the case of ruler/god or god/ruler images that leave most scholars perplexed because of their allegedly dubious identification (cf. Carney 2000: 34), one can argue that the image equated, or joined various aspects of the divine: the god himself, the deified Alexander, and the ruling king. The case of the images of Alexander or those representations of deities that resemble Alexander was the same: in the awareness of their contemporaries they were one, in the very same way as Indra was Dionysos for the Macedonians or Dionysos was Indra for the local peoples in India, Ammon was Zeus etc. The rulers strove to emulate Alexander's deeds, to be compared to him; what they really had in mind, nonetheless, was hardly the historical king but to a much greater extent his legendary counterpart.

A striking example of this tendency is the biography of one of the most avid imitators, Mithridates VI Eupator Dionysos: a life story full of miraculous events, among which such events as taming of a wild horse and a love affair with an Amazon princess take place. At the same time Mithridates literally followed in Alexander's footsteps by for instance repeating his donations to the same cities and temples, or actually wearing his cloak that was presented by Cleopatra III to the temple on Cos, and subsequently was offered to the king of Pontus – only to be later intercepted by Pompey (App. *Mith.* 116). Equally interesting is the case of Mark Antony whose actions in the East and ceremonies carried out in honour of Cleopatra and her children owe a lot to Alexander's legend, especially in its Dionysiac aspect. Interestingly enough, both Mithridates and Antony, just like the Ptolemies according to Theocritus *Encomium of Ptolemy Philadelphus*, claimed some kind of common ancestry with Alexander. Mithridates believed himself to descend from the Argeads via Seleucus (with whom he could indeed trace relationship through his female ancestors), while Antony fabricated a legendary progenitor of the *gens Antonia*, allegedly a son of Heracles, named Anton (Plut. *Ant.* 4). In the late Roman Empire several topics were added, unknown to earlier iconography and alluding to more or less anecdotic episodes, such as the miraculous conception by Zeus Ammon or Nectanebo [Fig. 10], or the taming of Bucephalas on the Severan period agonistic 'Koinon' issues and on the 4th-5th 'contorniates' (Dahmen 2007: Plates 23.1-2 and 28.4 resp.). This sudden change in iconographic focus can be ascribed to the growing popularity of the romanticized legend of the Conqueror but falls into the realm of *imitatio* as well, especially in the Severan context.

Hence, the argument to be advanced is that since there is a large hiatus between the approximate date of the first probable redactions of the Romance and its first known recensions, a closer look at the development of iconography, both of Alexander himself and his imitators, may give some

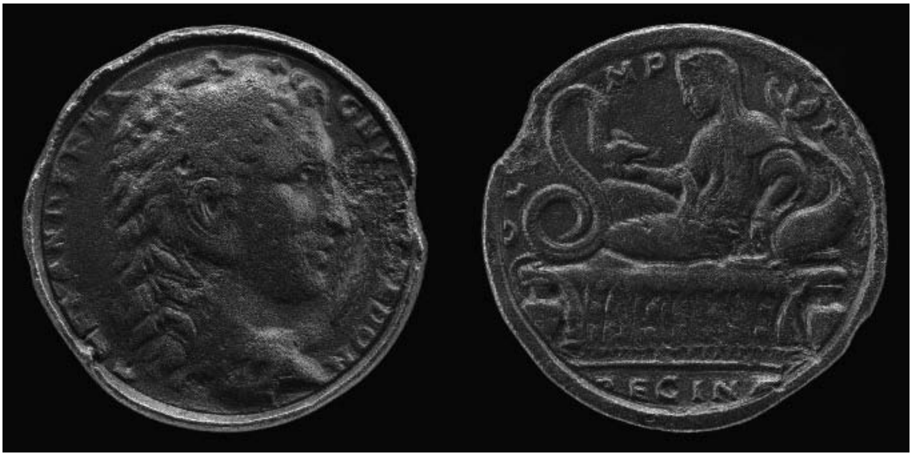

Fig. 10. Olympias and the snake. Late 4th/5th century contorniates. British Museum reg. No. R.4803. © Trustees of the British Museum.

ideas about how Alexander was perceived and therefore how the myth developed. Roman examples, in particular those from the Severan age, which saw a renaissance of interest in Alexander, but also much earlier 'struggle' for the appropriation of Alexander's heritage between Antony and Octavian, prove that the Alexander that was imitated and worshipped, was the romanticized Alexander of the legend, rather than the historical personage. This might, moreover, explain the discrepancy between two coexisting (and apparently not contradictory for the contemporaries) views of Alexander in the Roman tradition. One of them, constructed on moral grounds, saw Alexander as guilty of *hubris* and *tryphē*, while the other saw him as legendary conqueror equal to the gods and worthy of emulation (see for instance Spencer 2002: 34).

Between these two images the 'historical' Alexander seems to be lost from sight, especially if we put aside the basic account of events. Even though the extant sources still drew on the memoirs of eyewitnesses and the royal ephemera, their accounts abound in either romanticizing episodes, or moralistic comments. Whatever was preserved from iconographical sources belongs to the idealizing tradition, therefore to the Romance rather than moral admonition or historical accurateness. A closer look at the images, their context, dissemination and modifications (both stylistic and ideological) they underwent, might contribute to our understanding of how the Romance came into being and developed during those years from which textual evidence is lost. The preserved images cannot, of course, make up for the lost texts, but they can produce some guidelines as to what aspects were important during the Hellenistic age, help fill some gaps and possibly give us some insight into what we are missing.

Plutarch's commentary on the famous anecdote quoted as the motto of this paper is as follows: 'our belief or disbelief of this story will neither increase nor diminish our admiration for Alexander'. For the Roman biographer whose stance is highly moralistic, imaginary deeds, i.e. those derived from the legends, had the same value as historical facts described by eyewitnesses. 'Reliable' authors, too, describe episodes which nowadays would be defined as belonging to the matter of myth or legend rather than history, even though they discard other stories, labelling them 'fictions' (e.g. Strabo 15.1.9), which means that the borderline between fact and fiction was far less definite than it may seem to the modern reader. More so, apparently, to those kings, commanders and emperors, who tried to follow in his steps and emulate him: the Alexander of his imitators is clearly the Alexander of the Romance.

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A Flying King

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The painting from the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg (front cover) illustrates the text of Firdousi's *Shahnama* (completed in 1010 A.D.), and is one of the few known images that create an interesting discussion about shared mythological, folk, literary and art history, when details of the visual representation of a story in one cultural tradition are ascribed to another, in which those details are lost or absent.

This universal phenomenon can be identified as the wandering iconography of wandering stories, or intervisuality of intertextuality. Among its examples are the first illustrations of the Bible, based on the patterns established for Homer's and Euripides' works[1], or the famous Innsbruck plate, depicting a king's apotheosis; however, the name of the king is still to be determined between the Greek Alexander, the Semitic Nimrūd or the Iranian Kay Kāvūs[2].

The painting from St Petersburg shows the flight of Kay Kavus, a 'naughty' king of the mythological Kayanid dynasty, who could be correlated with the historical Achaemenids. The Avestan prototype of this king was granted immortality but lost it due to his inappropriate behavior. His flight in the later sources could be a reminder of the seventy five years (half of his reign) he spent in the heavens ruling the angels[3].

Of special importance is the construction of his flying machine, which is the main identifier of the royal aerial expedition: the engine of the flying apparatus consists of four hungry eagles, tied to the throne and striving to

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[1] Weitzmann 1959.

[2] This example was brought to my attention by the late Oleg Grabar: the flying king was assumed to be Alexander the Great, the plate was assumed to have been produced in the Muslim world despite the mistakes in the Arabo-Persian text (Redford 1990). See also Abdullaeva 2010, 23.

[3] Bundahishn, 74 (West, 1892); Denkart, IX, 22.5 (Chunakova 1997); Chunakova 2004, 125; Vevaina 2010, 231-243.

The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East, 405–409

reach the pieces of meat attached on top of the poles above their heads. This particular iconography became common in the *Shahnama* copies of the manuscripts from the 15th century[4]. The European versions of the story, based mostly on the Alexander Romance, preferred the shape of a cage-like box[5].

Some of the *Shahnama* manuscripts contain a very peculiar illustration of the episode absent from the poem: Kay Kavus shooting his arrow into an angel holding a fish.

The origin of this enigmatic visual detail could be traced by comparing this story with some historical and theological treatises, for example the later versions of the 10th-century Persian adaptations of Tabarī's *Tafsīr* (commentary on the Qur'an) and *Tārīkh ar-Rusūl wa-l-Mulūk (*'The History of Prophets and Kings'). In one of them Nimrud, enraged by being incapable of burning Ibrahim, decided to destroy the source of his faith, his God and went up into the sky. In his 11th century *Qisas al-Anbiyā* ('Stories of the Prophets') Tha'ālabī mentions that after several days of flight Nimrud started to shoot his arrows, hoping to kill Ibrahim's God, who sent the angel Jabrā'īl with the fish in his hands. Nimrud's arrow having pierced the fish was caught by Jabrā'īl and sent back to the king who thought that he had killed Ibrahim's God and went back down to the earth.

All these versions came from a much earlier legend, which by the New Persian period had lost its didactic message, Firdousi's story even lost the motivation for Kay Kavus' flight, as he obviously was not going to kill God.

The ancient Mesopotamian story of the kingly flight[6] reaches its semantic apogee in the story of Alexander the Great. The earliest description of it in the western tradition can be traced back to an 8th-century Greek manuscript, where the story was borrowed from the Talmud (4th century AD) by routes obscure[7].

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[4] Milstein, Ruhrdanz, and Schmitz 1999, 120.

[5] The construction of this kind can be seen in the earliest Persian paintings: Nimrud in the sky/Ibrahim in the fire, Washington, D.C., The Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art 57.16, ca. 1300, Shiraz (?) (Sims and Stanley 2002, 222-7). This precisely follows the description, given in the text of the relevant episode in Tabari's Tafsir as *sanduq* – 'box, case' (Yaghmāyī 1960, 481-3), or *tābūt* – 'coffin' (Tha'ālabī 1961, 84).

[6] On Sumerian and Babylonian origins of the story of the flying king (Gilgamesh and Etana) see Dalley 1989, 198; Stoneman 2008, 117. Muslim tradition seems to have borrowed it via the translations of the Pseudo-Callisthenes version into Syriac (Wallis Budge 1889), Coptic (Lemm 1903), Ethiopian (Weymann 1901), and Armenian. The Middle Persian translation, which is mentioned in some sources has not survived. For more detailed bibliography see Stoneman 2008 and Bertels 1948.

[7] For full bibliography see Stoneman 2008 and Schmidt 1995.

The flight story in the Alexander Romance is paired with the story of Alexander investigating the seabed in a bathyscaphe – ‘a diving bell’, or glass jar, also specially constructed for this purpose. Both episodes became extremely popular in the European literary tradition from the 11th century onwards. Their main idea is obviously to show the king not only as an adventurer, but as a philosopher, trying to find the Truth and the Source of Life and in most of them – to demonstrate with his example the vanity and limitations of humans before God.

These coupled stories were often divided, and one part could be abandoned. Not only did some authors/scribes prefer one tale to the other, but more generally: the Christian world[8] gave priority to Alexander’s investigation of the heavens (though very often coupled with the sea episode), while in the Eastern literature Alexander is never mentioned as an aviator, but only as a diver and even then only in very few sources[9]. The evolution of his image goes through several stages: Firdousi’s Alexander is a vain conqueror (he neither flies nor dives in the *Shahnama*); Nizāmī (1141-1203, or 1213) in his *Iskandarnāma*[10] makes him find an ideal human society instead of the Fountain of Life and Truth. Amīr Khusraw’s (1253-1325)[11] Iskandar spends a hundred days exploring the bottom of the sea in the glass box and dies after having been scared by a sea monster (sic). In Jāmī’s (1414-1492) *Khiradnāma-yi Iskandarī* (‘Book of Wisdom of Iskandar’), Iskandar discovers the ideal society, although without diving or flying. Jami’s disciple and friend‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī (1441-1501) in his *Sadd-i Iskandarī* (‘The Wall of Iskandar’), which he compiled in Chaghatay gave the most interesting account of Iskandar’s maritime expedition, which was much more impressive than that of the *Titanic*: three thousand ships participated in it, each of them as big as a whole city with houses and streets! All his country’s elite (court, army and tradesmen) were required to join the journey with Socrates as the head of the expedition. After all seven seas had been investigated Iskandar decided to reach the centre of the ocean. Only three hundred ships were allowed to accompany him. After two years of travel and the announcement of the angel Surūsh, Iskandar descended into the sea. This brings Iskandar to a very special state of saintly enlightenment, and he happily dies.

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[8] About a hundred images of various illustrations of Alexander’s flight, not only in manuscripts but in European architectural art, especially in monumental church decoration, used all over Medieval Europe from Italy and France to Germany and England, were published by Schmidt 1995.

[9] This can be connected with Elias’ flight in Christianity and the celestial journey with the Prophet Muhammad (Gruber 2008, 289). For bibliography on Alexander Romance in the East see Hanaway 1998, 609-12, and Simpson 2010, 127-146.

[10] This consists of two parts, which are usually called *Sharafnāma* (Book of Glory) and *Khiradnāma* (Book of Knowledge), or *Iqbālnāma* (Book of Fortune), completed in 1203 or 1213.

[11] The poem is called *Āyina-yi Iskandarī* – Mirror for Iskandar, finished in 1299-1300 (edited by J. Mirsaidov, 1977).

It is obvious that out of two expeditions the second is given more importance. According to M. Piemontese, "the king's secret purpose was to search for a tunnel under the sea, a passage permitting circumnavigation and the way to come out of the abyss, the escape from death"[12]. Iskandar was rescued by the Angel in the Kingdom of Light and in the Land of Darkness, where he failed to find the Water of Life, and from the Ocean abyss, where he failed to find the universal Truth and the exit from this world.

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[12] Piemontese 2007, 42-43.

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